

MARX COMES TO INDIA

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*Earliest Indian Biographies of Karl Marx*  
by *Lala Hardayal and Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai,*  
*with Critical Introductions*

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# MARX COMES TO INDIA

## Introduction

(P.C. Joshi and K.Damodaran)

Ideas of Socialism and Marxism had become a well-established trend in Western Europe and in countries like Russia by the end of the nineteenth century. In India, however, they became a decisive force only after the victory of the Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the advent of the Soviet Union. The British rulers strove hard to prevent revolutionary ideas from reaching India. At the same time they encouraged ideas aimed at keeping the people in submission and passivity. Revolutionary ideas, however, do not recognize frontiers. Socialism, at least in its utopian, egalitarian or liberal humanitarian form, had reached India long before the October Revolution and found a ready response among the people.

There is nothing strange in this, for the concept of egalitarianism had been in existence in India ever since the division of society into four *varnas*, about ten centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. Some of the later poets of the *Rig Veda* and the early Upanishadic philosophers had expressed their anguish at the break-up of the unity of the primitive pastoral tribal societies and had raised their voice against the growing inequalities among the people. Upholding the principle of the totality and unity of human existence, they preached love, compassion, justice and brotherhood, all of which in course of time became elements of a religious life. While the exploiting classes used religion to manipulate the minds of the masses in order to consolidate their own vested interests, the oppressed masses used it as a protest against the inequalities and injustice prevailing in society. Struggles for justice, equality and human dignity continued under the banner of religion through the Middle Ages down to the modern era. Kabir, Chaitanya, Nanak and other saints of the *Bhakti* movement in the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, fought against caste and religious differences and for equality of all human beings under the slogan: "All men are the children of God." The *Bhakti* movement paved



the way for some of the most militant struggles of the oppressed peasantry against their exploiters.

The leaders of Indian renaissance and social reform in the 19th century were influenced not only by these progressive trends in India's heritage, but also by modern values like freedom, democracy and socialism emanating from the West. They were inspired by the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity proclaimed by the French Revolution and the ideas of the Chartist movement in England. Modern education and the development of transport and communication enabled them to establish contacts with the radical thinkers of Europe. As early as 1833 Rammohan Roy, while in England, had met Robert Owen, the well-known Utopian socialist, and exchanged views with him. In 1871 certain radical elements in Calcutta contacted Karl Marx and tried to forge links with the International Workingmen's Association founded by him. We do not yet know who these early socialists were, but we do know that a letter written by one of them was considered by the International. The minutes of a meeting of the General Council of the International held on August 15, 1871 recorded as follows:

"The minutes of the preceding meeting having been read and confirmed, the Secretary announced that branches had been formed at Liverpool and Loughborough in Leicestershire. He also read a letter from Calcutta asking for powers to start a section in India. The Secretary was instructed to write and advise the establishment of a branch, but he (is) to inform the writer that it must be self-supporting. He was also to urge the necessity of enrolling natives in the Association".<sup>1</sup>

The newspaper report of this Council meeting published in *The Eastern Post* No. 151, dated August 19, 1871 cited part of the letter received from Calcutta which said:

"Great discontent exists among the people and the British Government is thoroughly disliked. The taxation is excessive and the revenues are swallowed up in maintaining a costly system of officialdom. As in other places, the extravagances of the ruling class contrast in a painful manner with the wretched condition of the workers, whose labour creates the wealth, thus squandered. The principles of the International would bring the mass of the people into its organisation, if a section was started."<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the 1870's Bankim Chandra Chatterjee raised his voice not only against the colonial regime but also

against the exploitation of the peasants by the landlords. The peasants were exploited, oppressed and down-trodden. But it was they who constituted the nation. "Where will you be if the entire peasantry revolts?" he asked. "What can't they do? Where there is no welfare for them there is no welfare for the country." He asserted that "land belongs to all; it is not anyone's private property."<sup>3</sup> He believed that the thought of Rousseau and the consequences of the French Revolution had paved the way for the rise of Communism and the International:<sup>4</sup>

"The tree which Rousseau planted by his theory of the common ownership of land came to have ever new fruits: Even today Europe is full of the fruits of that theory. Communism is a fruit of that tree. International is a fruit of that tree."<sup>5</sup> He went to the extent of advocating *samya*, common ownership of land and capital and equal distribution of wealth. In his own words:

"Land and capital, which produce other wealth, should be the common property of all in society. What is produced should be shared equally by all. Then there would be no distinction between the rich and the poor. All would work equally. Everyone has a right to an equal share of property. This is communism in the real sense."<sup>6</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore continued this tradition and placed it within a broader perspective. In his article on Socialism (1892), he wrote the following:

"Socialists want that production and distribution should be vested in the society in general and not in the hands of some powerful individuals. They say that the production and distribution of wealth is a function of the entire society. At present, the common people are being deprived of the possibility of full development of their personality because it now depends on the whims and interests of the propertied men . . . Freedom is impossible without material prosperity. Therefore, wealth should be distributed among the people; otherwise freedom can never spread to everyone... Socialism seeks to distribute wealth equally among all and thereby reunify society. In this way, socialism seeks to grant maximum freedom to everyone. Its object is a reconciliation of community and freedom in human society."<sup>7</sup>

Tagore was not sure whether such an equal distribution of wealth was practicable or not. "The Socialists seek," he wrote in a letter in 1893, "to distribute wealth equally among all mankind. I do not know whether that is possible or not. If it is totally impossible then



providence is extremely cruel and humanity extremely unfortunate.”<sup>8</sup>

Three years later, in a letter dated November 1, 1896, Swami Vivekananda declared: “I am a socialist, not because I think it is a perfect system, but because half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried.”<sup>9</sup>

It is true that Vivekananda’s definition of Socialism was vague and unscientific, for according to him, “the doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism, while that which advocates the cause of the individual is called individualism.” But he was impressed by the struggles of the various classes in India and expressed the hope that the working people would one day become the ruling class in the country. He observed that “as the result of grinding pressure and tyranny, from time out of mind, the Shudras, as a rule, are either meanly servile, licking doglike the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts. Again, at all times their hopes and aspirations are baffled; hence a firmness of purpose and perseverance in action they have none.”<sup>10</sup> But he knew that such humiliating conditions were not to last long. “A time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, with their Shudrahood . . . (They) will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western World, and the thoughtful are at their wits’ end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.”<sup>11</sup>

The socialism of Tagore and Vivekananda was an adaptation of western ideas to what was progressive in the religious and philosophical traditions of India. It appealed to the rich to love the poor and do justice to them. It never called for a radical transformation of society through the struggles of the exploited masses. The uplift of the masses depended mainly on the philanthropy of the rich. It was not free from the idealistic and religious thought of India. Tagore was influenced by Kabir and Chaitanya and the ancient Upanishads as interpreted by the Brahmo Samaj leaders. His aim was the realization of the universal in man through love which was “the highest bliss that man could attain to, for through it alone he truly knows that he is more than himself and that he is one with the all.”<sup>12</sup> Vivekananda claimed that he was a socialist be-

cause he believed in *Vedanta*. True, his *Vedanta* was different from the earlier systems of *Vedanta*. It was practical *Vedanta* which could be practised not in an ivory tower, but by the common people on earth. Vivekananda visualised a society free from exploitation and oppression and in which everyone was happy. Such a society, according to him, could be established only through a renaissance of Hinduism. Gradually, however, the concept of socialism, as it developed in India, became more secular and more mundane.

Swami Vivekananda once had remarked that Kerala, with its hierarchy of castes and subcastes, with its untouchability and unapproachability, with its obnoxious customs and rituals, appeared as a lunatic asylum! But it was in the same Kerala that modern ideas of democracy and socialism emerged as early as the first decade of the present century and co-existed with primitive, outmoded ideas. The socialist ideas of Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai were more modern, more secular and more mature than those of Tagore and Vivekananda. He wrote in 1907:

“Socialism may appear to be a new idea to our countrymen. But there is no doubt that such ideas are becoming stronger and stronger in the development of the world. Throughout the world today there is a conflict between the workers and their employers, between labour and capital. It may be seen that the condition of the workers is very bad and that the capitalists who exploit their labour become more and more affluent. Poverty embraces the worker, and wealth the employer. If we examine the reason for this anomaly we will understand the real position concerning the relation between the workers and their employers and the cruelty of the capitalist in his attitude to the workers. It will be in the interest of the welfare of the country that the doctrines of the Socialists, who demand equality of opportunity, take root among the workers of this land.”<sup>13</sup>

The socialist ideas of the Indian intellectuals of this early period cannot be said to be scientific in the modern sense of the term. They were influenced by Utopian socialists like Owen and Fourier, Christian socialists like F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, Fabian socialists like Bernard Shaw, liberal socialists like H.G. Wells, and anarchists like Kropotkin (Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was influenced by Fourier and St. Simon, and Swami Vivekananda had met the anarchist leader Kropotkin in Europe before he expressed his socialist views). The working class was still in an embryonic state and socialism not yet proletarian or Marxian. But gradually



Karl Marx and his ideas became popular among the progressive intellectuals and the oppressed sections of the people in India.

Perhaps the first mention of Karl Marx in India was in an article reproduced from an English journal in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in 1903 under the caption: "Rise of foreign socialists: Their remarkable growth in the continent in recent years." The writer explained in detail the rapid growth of the socialist movement in Germany and France and mentioned the name of Marx only in a casual manner without much appreciation of the significance of his activities and writings.<sup>14</sup> Marx and his contributions were still, as a rule, unknown in India.

There was, however, a marked change in the situation by the beginning of the next decade. Hardayal's article "Karl Marx: a Modern Rishi" appeared in the *Modern Review* in March 1912, more than five and a half years before the Socialist Revolution in Russia. In the same year, in August, Ramkrishna Pillai published a short biography of Karl Marx in Malayalam. This apparently was the first book on Marx published in an Indian language. In October 1916, exactly one year before the Russian Revolution, Ambalal Patel wrote an article on Karl Marx in the Gujarati magazine *Navajivan and Satya*. In it Marx's clarion call "Workers of the world, unite: You have nothing to lose but your chains," was prominently displayed with the following note:

"Attempts of erstwhile philosophers to justify or explain away the exploitation of poor people are no more effective, since the declaration of the Communist Manifesto in the year 1847. The workers of the world can shed the chains of their slavery by their own power."<sup>15</sup>

How did modern concepts of socialism take root in the Indian soil? What were their social motivations? How and why did Marx's ideas come to India? An investigation into the social, economic, political and psychological changes that took place in India in the latter half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century may provide the answer.

## II

The year 1857 was a turning point in the history of India. After the brutal suppression of the widespread revolt, the British rulers acquired supremacy, consolidated themselves, and incorporated the whole country into their colonial system. This was achieved

mainly with the support and connivance of some loyal feudal lords and native princes who were prepared to surrender their independence and sovereignty to the alien masters in exchange for petty privileges. British capitalism preserved for its own benefit the pre-capitalist feudal relations of production and forms of ownership and other obsolete institutions and customs prevailing in India. It created a new class of landlords and zamindars who were allowed to expropriate a Substantial part of the wealth produced by the peasants. It sustained about 600 'Maharajas' in 'princely states', covering about a quarter of the population of the country, in order to create an illusion among the people that they were ruled by their own kings, and not by foreigners. But, as Karl Marx pointed out, these "native princes" were "the most servile tools of English despotism . . . strongholds of the present abominable English system and the greatest obstacles to Indian progress."<sup>16</sup> Distorted histories and falsified biographies were produced to prove that the Maharajas were the descendants of ancient dynasties and inheritors of the glorious traditions of the great rulers of India. But, according to Marx, a vast majority of these Maharajas "did not possess even the prestige of antiquity, being generally usurpers of very recent date, set up by the English intrigue."<sup>17</sup>

As is well-known, the British came to India as traders and plunderers. They purchased and plundered the superior products of Indian craftsmanship like muslin and jewels and agricultural products like pepper and indigo and sold them in Europe at enormous profits. This shameless exploitation has been acknowledged by historians as one of the main factors that contributed to the Industrial Revolution in England.

The British exploitation of India as a market for industrial goods manufactured in England and as a source of raw materials for British industries disrupted the age-old traditional economy based on agriculture and handicrafts. As Marx observed: "India, the great workshop of cotton manufacture for the world since immemorial times, became now inundated with English twists and cotton stuffs. After its own products had been excluded from England, or only admitted on the most cruel terms, British manufactures were poured into it at a small or merely nominal duty, to the ruin of the native cotton fabrics once so celebrated."<sup>18</sup>

The British regime not only destroyed Indian handicrafts and prevented the growth of modern industries, but also ruined agricul-



ture by intensified exploitation which resulted in increasing poverty and pauperisation of the peasantry. The tiller was squeezed by the state, the landlord and the usurer. He was deprived of more than 75% of his produce. Taxation went on increasing and millions of rupees were converted into Sterling and flowed to England as "Home Charges". Expenses of wars in Burma, Afghanistan and China conducted for the expansion of the British empire, were debited to India. The public debt of India reached staggering figures. Even interest on these debts became intolerably heavy. Unemployment became widespread. Famine stalked the land. There were local famines in the 70s and 80s followed by more terrible ones in 1896-97 and 1899-1900, each of which affected almost half of India. Lord Curzon's own estimate was that about one-fourth of the entire population of India was covered by relief operations.<sup>19</sup> The unprecedented famines inevitably were followed by the equally unprecedented scourge of epidemics which were worst in Western India. Twenty-six million people died of starvation between 1876 and 1900.<sup>20</sup>

Although unorganized, the peasants frequently rose in revolt against their exploiters. Between 1792 and the end of the 19th century there were no fewer than 30 peasant revolts in Malabar alone.<sup>21</sup> The spontaneous revolts of 1841, 1844, 1849 and 1896 were especially fierce. Peasant revolts also occurred in Bengal, Punjab and other provinces.

The worsening condition of the people and their heroic struggles against oppression could not but stir the new intelligentsia, the very creation of British administration, and a few liberal-minded British civilian intellectuals. Together with the expansion of money-and-market economy, the penetration of capitalism into the traditional hierarchical structure of society and the development of communication and modern education, had helped foster rudiments of the ideas of modern democracy and freedom that found their echo in the emerging intellectual elite. Under the impact of the new social and economic changes there arose a galaxy of intellectuals mainly of landlord origin—writers, critics, lawyers, doctors, and government employees—who looked to western countries for inspiration. The stifling conformist mood of the previous decades gave place to a freshness of thought and imaginative optimism.

The intellectuals of this period could not clearly discern the contradictions hidden behind the changing social order. They had

no clear programme either political, economic or social. Progressive democratic aspirations were often mingled with religious motivations, philosophical idealism and a nostalgia for the so-called 'golden age' of India. But their criticism of the autocratic power of the colonial regime and of the arbitrary rule of the feudal exploiters, and their merciless exposure of outmoded pre-capitalist customs and social relations helped to arouse national consciousness among the people. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was one of those outstanding writers who wielded their powerful pen against colonial slavery, supported the demands of the oppressed toiling masses against the rich landlords and pleaded for a more egalitarian system of society.

Towards the end of the 19th century a new type of intellectuals—erudite scholars, economists and politicians—appeared on the scene. Their extensive studies of the economy and politics of the country laid the basis of a new national upsurge. M.G. Ranade's *Essays on Indian Economics* was published in 1898. In 1901 appeared three valuable books, *The Economic History of India* by Romesh Chandra Dutt, *Poverty and the Un-British Rule in India* by Dadabhai Naoroji and *Prosperous British India* by William Digby. These well-documented publications which depicted the alarming poverty and degradation of India resulting from British exploitation became the first scientific classics of modern India.

### III

The new awakening was the result of the vast changes which had been taking place for several years, unnoticed, beneath the surface of everyday life. New productive forces were emerging from the old relations of production. Already by the beginning of the 1850s there was a marked change in the form of British exploitation. "The ruling classes of Great Britain," Marx wrote, "have had, till now, but an accidental, transitory and exceptional interest in the progress of India. The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the monarchy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it. But now the tables are turned. The millocracy have discovered that the transformation of India into a reproductive country has become of vital importance to them, and that to that end, it is necessary, above all, to gift her with the means of irrigation and of internal communication. They intend now drawing a net of railroads over India. And they will do it. The results must be inappreciable."<sup>22</sup>



The far-reaching effects of the introduction of railways in India were foreseen by Marx as early as 1853:

"I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufacturers. But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coal, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of a railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with the railways. The railway system will, therefore, become in India truly the forerunner of modern industry."<sup>23</sup>

British capital began to be invested in India in industries, mines, transport and plantations—all owned and controlled by the British. But gradually Indian industrialists also entered the scene. A number of industries "not immediately connected with the railways" came into existence. The number of cotton mills owned by Indian capitalists increased from 58 in 1880 to 193 in 1900. According to official figures the total number of factories increased from 655 in 1892 to 1533 in 1902 and that of the workers from 316816 to 541634 in the same period. A few modern banks also came into existence in order to cater to the needs of industries. India was slowly entering the era of capitalism. But unlike capitalism in England and other European countries, Indian capitalism was destined to grow in colonial and pre-capitalist surroundings. It was regulated and controlled by the British rulers in the interest of British capitalism. It had to face fierce competition and obstruction at the hands of the English capitalists at home and the English rulers in India. The clash of interests between the British capitalists and their Indian counterparts was inevitable. In 1882 the Indian Government, at the instance of the millowners of Lancashire, abolished the excise duties on the imports of cotton fabrics into India. It was a great blow to the budding native industry. Indian industrialists and the English-educated middle class intelligentsia who supported them were perturbed and agitated.

In 1885 the Indian National Congress was founded. The early Congress leaders, on the one hand, expressed their loyalty to the British rulers, and on the other, pleaded for facilities for the

development of Indian industries and a share in the administration of the country. But the actual experience of British policy and practice destroyed all their illusions. None of the demands of the Congress, as formulated in its various resolutions, was conceded. The promise of Queen Victoria's Proclamation to usher in an era of "peace and progress" stood belied in all spheres of Indian life. This betrayal inevitably produced growing unrest that evolved gradually into the Indian national movement for independence.

The British rulers in their turn became more adamant and more repressive. Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, wrote to Viceroy Elgin in June 1897: "The more I see and hear of the National Congress Party the more I am impressed with the seditious and double-sided character of the prime movers of the organization." In May 1899 he advised Curzon, who followed Elgin as the Viceroy of India, to take more effective measures to curb the influence of the Congress. Curzon wrote to Hamilton in November of the same year that his greatest ambition while in India was to assist the Congress to a peaceful demise.<sup>24</sup>

The visible hardening of the British attitude moved the Congress towards the demand for *Swaraj*—self-rule—for India. A new direction of mass approach and mass activation in politics was opening up. The traditional methods of the moderate leaders who pinned their hopes in British justice and went on petition-mongering and leading deputations, piling up a record of failures, were challenged by the extremist wing of the Congress—Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and others—who urged mass struggle for *Swaraj*. This process of radicalization was hastened by the emergence of a new force—the working class of India.

#### IV

The earliest factory workers in India generally belonged to the lower castes. They were impoverished agricultural workers who migrated to towns for want of food and employment. They became victims of a double oppression: oppression by the higher castes and by the new capitalist class. They were soon joined by ruined artisans and pauperised peasantry belonging to different castes. A number of poor Muslims and Christians also became industrial workers. Thus, through intermingling and cooperation dictated by common aims and aspirations, the oppressed labourers belonging to



different castes and religions gradually began to form into a new class—the working class.

The workers had to live in intolerable, inhuman conditions. They were forced to work for seventeen and eighteen, and in some factories more than twenty hours a day at very low wages. "The charge of inordinately long hours of work has been proved," reported the Indian Factory Labour Commission. "We have seen that operatives in running factories have had, on occasions, to work 17 and 18 hours a day. In rice mills and flour mills men have occasionally to work 20 to 22 hours. In printing presses men have had to work for 22 hours a day for seven consecutive days. . . . For habitually long hours one must look at the textile industry."<sup>25</sup> Even children below seven years of age were not exempted. Fines, dismissals and even physical torture were the punishment for the slightest expression of dissent or disobedience. Many laws were enacted with the aim of ensuring for the employers, especially the foreign capitalists, a stable and obedient labour force and maximum profits. But there was no legislation to safeguard the interests of the workers. With fewer facilities to develop, Indian capitalists sought to increase their profits by more intensified exploitation of cheap labour and raw materials and more inhuman treatment of the workers.

But the workers were not prepared to bow down to these oppressive conditions for ever. They became increasingly aware of their position and conscious of their inherent strength. They began to protest against glaring injustices and to agitate for more wages, reduction of working hours, and better conditions of work. Finally workers resorted to the weapon of strike. True, they had not yet emerged as an independent force with their own independent economic and political demands and their own forms of struggle. They were not yet conscious of the requirements of militant mass organizations with clear perspectives and programmes. Their struggles against the exploiters were often spontaneous, unorganized and primitive. But they were capable of influencing the national movement and the socio-economic thought of India.

The railway workers' strike at Howrah in 1862 for a reduction of working hours was, perhaps, the first militant action of the working class in India. There were a few isolated struggles in the seventies. By the eighties strikes had become more frequent. A number of strikes took place in the textile mills of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Coimbatore, in the jute mills of Calcutta and the

rice mills, flour mills and printing presses in various parts of the country. According to official estimates there were 25 serious strikes and a number of minor ones of short duration between 1880 and 1890.<sup>26</sup>

In September 1884 the mill workers of Bombay submitted a memorandum to the Commissioner. Their demands included a short recess after midday meals, a weekly holiday, limitation of working hours, regulation of payment of wages and compensation for accidents within factories. But even such meagre demands were not conceded. It was after continuous agitation for six years that the Government appointed a Commission to look into the grievances of the workers. As recommended by the Commission a Factory Act was passed in 1891. The demands for a recess of half an hour after midday meals and weekly holiday were at last conceded. It took another ten years for the Government to fix the working time at 12 hours a day!<sup>27</sup>

The frustration and disillusion created by the unhelpful attitude of the Government and the intensified exploitation by the employers impelled the workers to fight more resolutely for their demands. In the last decade of the 19th century strikes increased in number, intensity, militancy and duration. The most outstanding and militant strikes in this period were those that took place in the Budge Budge Jute Mill in 1895, in the textile mills in Ahmedabad involving 8000 workers against the decision of the Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Association to substitute a fortnightly wage system for a weekly one, in several mills in Bombay in 1897 against the discontinuance of daily payment of wages, and in Bombay Cotton Mill in 1898 for an increase in wages by 10 per cent. There were many other strikes not only in Ahmedabad and Bombay, but also in Nagpur, Kanpur, Calcutta, Madras, Coimbatore, and other places.

The moderates and conservatives in the national movement were alarmed at the growing struggles of the working class. They believed that such militant actions by the masses would hinder the development of the country by constitutional and peaceful methods of agitation. The progressive and radical sections of the intelligentsia, on the contrary, hailed the struggles of the workers and combined their attacks on the colonial regime with a criticism of the emerging bourgeois relations of production under which the working peoples were oppressed and exploited both by foreign and native capitalists. Warning the oppressing and exploiting classes



Swami Vivekananda stated:

"They (the lower classes) are the backbone of the nation in all countries. If these lower classes stop work, from where will you get your food and clothing? If the sweepers of Calcutta stop work for a day, it creates a panic, and if they strike for three days, the whole town will be depopulated by the outbreak of epidemics. If the labourers stop work, your supply of food and cloth also stops. And you regard them as low class people and vaunt about your own culture! Engrossed in the struggle for existence, they did not have the opportunity for the awakening of knowledge. They have worked so long uniformly, like machines guided by human intelligence, and the clever, educated sections have taken the substantial part of the fruit of their labour. In every country, this has been the case. But times have changed. The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact and making a united front against this, determined to extract their legitimate dues. The masses of Europe and America have been the first to awaken and have already begun to fight. Signs of the awakening have shown themselves in India too, as is evident from the number of strikes among the lower classes now-a-days. The upper class will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much. The well-being of the higher classes now lies in helping the lower to get their legitimate rights."<sup>28</sup>

The militant struggles of the industrial workers and the growing unrest among the masses in general gave an impetus to the new national upsurge. The process of political rethinking inevitably led to a growing and sharp demarcation inside the Indian National Congress—the emergence of the moderate and extremist wings within it. The idea of revolt seized the minds of many young men and women. Dissatisfied by the ineffective policies of the moderates, they sought to remove the scourge of slavery by mass action and violent means.

## V

Enough was happening in the world outside to move and to re-orientate national opinion. The victory of the Ethiopian army over the Italians in 1898 and the Boer revolt against the British armies in South Africa that began in 1899 added a new dimension to Indian political awareness. Then came the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The Japanese victory over the Czarist armed forces, the fall of Port

Arthur in January 1905 and the surrender of the Baltic fleet of Russia broke the myth of European superiority and invincibility. The victory of Japan was hailed by Indians as the victory of colonial Asia over imperialist Europe. The most important event was the Russian Revolution of 1905-07 against the Czarist autocracy. It created a stir in the whole colonial world including India and deeply impressed leaders of the eminence of Gandhi and Tilak in various ways. Commenting on the events in Russia, Gandhi wrote on July 1, 1905:

"A comparison can be made, up to a point, between the people of Russia and our own. Just as we are poor, the Russian people are also poor. We have no voice in conducting the affairs of state and have to pay taxes with demur, the same is true of the Russians also. Seeing such oppression, some Russians do come out bravely against it from time to time. Some time ago there was a rebellion in Russia . . ."<sup>29</sup> According to Gandhi the unrest in Russia had a great lesson for India. "If the Russian people succeed," he declared, "this revolution in Russia will be regarded as the greatest victory, the greatest event of the present century." He observed that there was much similarity between the Government of India and that of Russia. The power of the Viceroy was in no way less than that of the Czar. "We, too, can resort to the Russian remedy against tyranny. . . . We also can show the same strength that the Russian people have done."<sup>30</sup>

It was at this time that the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon accentuated the political discontent in India and led to the mass movement for 'Swaraj', 'Swadeshi', and 'Boycott' under the leadership of extremists like Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal, Balgangadhar Tilak and Lajpat Rai. The Indian National Congress at its annual session at Benares in 1905 and at Calcutta in 1906 protested against the partition. Dadabhai Naoroji who presided over the Calcutta session appealed to Congressmen all over the country to support the boycott movement and to take the vow of Swadeshi. The resolution passed by the Congress declared that "the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal against partition of that province was and is legitimate" and accorded its most cordial support to the Swadeshi movement. Another resolution demanded that "the system of government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies should be extended to India."

The boycott of British goods and the vow of Swadeshi gave an



impetus to the growth of Indian industries. The number of Indian-owned weaving mills increased from 175 in 1905 to 212 in 1908. A number of flour mills, rice mills, oil mills and printing presses came into existence. In 1907 Tata, till then a cotton trader, started the first Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur.

But this was only one side of the picture. People wanted not only the development of industries, but an end of the hated British *Raj*. To them boycott meant struggle for independence and a life without exploitation and oppression. The partition of Bengal and the widespread agitation against it strengthened the forces of extremism within and outside the Indian National Congress. The split in the Congress at its Surat session in 1907 was no accident, nor an aberration, but evidence of the search for a new path—a shift from constitutional agitation to the path of struggle and sacrifice.

Explaining the significance of the anti-partition agitation, Gandhi maintained that petitions and prayers to the alien rulers would not be effective unless they were backed by force. He wrote in his *Hind Swaraj* in 1908:

“The people were ready to resist the partition. At that time, the feeling ran high. Many leading Bengalis were ready to lose their all. They know their power; hence the conflagration. It is now well nigh unquenchable. The demand for the abrogation of the partition is tantamount to a demand for Home Rule . . . Hitherto we have considered that for the redress of grievances, we must approach the Throne and if we get no redress we must sit still except that we may still petition. After the Partition, people saw that petitions must be backed by force and that they must be capable of suffering. This new spirit must be considered to be the chief result of the partition.”<sup>31</sup>

The new spirit was all-pervasive. Hundreds of meetings were held in Bengal and other parts of the country to protest against partition and to demand *Swaraj*. Students and young men were in the forefront. The Government issued a circular banning the participation of students in public meetings. The students tore it to pieces and formed an ‘anti-circular society’ to fight the Government. Hartals, processions and demonstrations became the order of the day. Tens of thousands took to the streets. The cry of *Bande-mataram* rent the air. The press generally supported the agitation. The Government resorted to more and more repressive measures. New oppressive laws were enacted. Banning of meetings and

newspapers, arrests and prosecutions, detentions, deportations, *lathi* charges and even shootings followed. But repression only helped to arouse the anger of the people and to intensify the movement. People retaliated by more resolute action.

The movement soon spread among the workers in towns and peasants in the villages. Workers and peasants stepped onto the political scene in a hitherto unexpected way, destroying the myth of mass passivity, ignorance and backwardness. The Bengal Swadeshi Movement was only one, though the most important and well-known sector, of the new round of all-India political expression. The other upsurge, though less known, was in the Punjab. The British colonialists attempted to amend the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 so as to restrict the ownership rights of peasants. Under it the cultivators’ right of inheritance was denied. They could not cut trees to make ploughs and for their other daily needs. In short, the peasants were virtually being turned into tenants on their own lands. Two famous contemporary revolutionaries, Sufi Amba Prasad and Sardar Ajit Singh, Bhagat Singh’s uncle, led the peasant movement with such fiery passion that it became a mass conflagration (1906-07). The British colonialists were forced to withdraw the hated legislation and the awakened and militant peasants won.

This coincided with another mass rural agitation against increased irrigation rates in the Bari-Doab area, and increased land revenue in the Rawalpindi area. The peasant agitation was supported by the Patriots Association formed in 1907. The organisation worked for peasant welfare. It won the peasantry the support of the patriotic press and urban politicians. At its call twelve thousand peasants marched to Lahore on April 7, 1907, and protested against the increased irrigation rates. Another mass protest meeting was held in Rawalpindi on April 29, 1907. It was at this meeting that the stirring song which became famous in patriotic folklore was first sung, *Jatta Pag Sambhal* (Peasant, safeguard your turban—defend your self-respect and self-interest). The song was revived by Bhagat Singh and his comrades and has not lost its appeal, being sung even today.

The significance of this Punjab peasant upsurge was that it evoked conscious support of the left anti-imperialist elements who helped to win it broader democratic popular support. This was not all. The workers of the North-Western Railway had their



own grievances and they were stirred into action by the militant and just peasant movement. They went on strike and with the help of the indignant peasantry tore up the railway line, in key sections, and the British plan to move troops to suppress the peasant movement was successfully foiled. This is perhaps the first example of worker-peasant solidarity in Indian national history.<sup>32</sup> These two phenomena—the worker-peasant solidarity and the popular anti-imperialistic democratic upsurge in which the urban folk joined forces with the peasants—indicated the shape and the course that the Indian freedom struggle took in the subsequent decades, opening up new intellectual horizons before India's restless and determined anti-imperialist struggle.

The workers all over India boldly joined the mainstream of the national movement with their own demands. The strike in the Government of India Press in Calcutta in 1905, in the East India Railways in July 1905, among the port workers in Bombay in August 1906, and in the North-Western Railways in April and November 1907 are worth mentioning. There were strikes in the textile mills in Bombay, the jute mills in Calcutta in 1907, and in smaller industries in various parts of the country. Most of these strikes involved demands for increase in wages, paid holiday on Sunday, wages for overtime work, and better living conditions. In 1908 the textile workers of Bombay struck for six days in protest against the arrest and deportation of Tilak. This was perhaps the first political strike in India. Lenin commented:

"The infamous sentence pronounced by the British jackals against the Indian democrat Tilak—he was sentenced to a long term of exile, a question in the British House of Commons the other day revealed that the Indian jurors had insisted on acquittal and that the verdict had been passed by the vote of the British jurors!—this reprisal against a democrat by the lackeys of the money-bags evoked street demonstrations and a strike in Bombay. In India, too, the proletariat has already developed to conscious political mass struggle and, that being the case the Russian-style British regime in India is doomed."<sup>33</sup>

These political actions of the working class, however, were isolated actions of an emotional and empirical character and not the result of a clear understanding of their role in anti-imperialist struggle. The working class in this period did not yet know how to combine their struggle for economic demands against capitalist

exploitation with the struggle for the political emancipation of the country. They did not yet know how to deal with the Hindu-Muslim riots shrewdly engineered by the Government to split and sabotage the anti-imperialist movements. There was neither an organized working class movement on an all-India scale, nor trade unions worth the name, although some preliminary attempts were made to organize unions such as the Bombay Mill-hands Association (1890), the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma (1899), the Printers Union in Calcutta (1905) and the Seamen's Anjuman, Calcutta (1905). The political scene was still dominated by bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology. But the very entry of the workers in the political arena strengthened the hands of extremists and radicals and provided the struggle for independence with a new scope and a new meaning.

## VI

The widespread resentment against the repression launched by the alien regime and the urge to rebel and revolt against it impelled many young men and women to more militant action. A number of secret terrorist organizations already had sprung up in Bengal, Punjab and some other provinces by the end of the 19th century. In the initial stage they were encouraged and patronized by such eminent leaders as Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh and Sister Nivedita (the disciple of Swami Vivekananda). They brought into the national movement the cult of the bomb and the revolver. Their aim was to kill the hated British officers, high police officials, and their Indian spies.

The newly-created revolutionary bands avidly studied whatever material was available to them on India's own First War of Independence (1857) and the contemporary Chinese Boxer uprising, on the Italian Revolution for National Unification, the Russian Revolution and Irish Resistance for inspiration and guidance. Not only the speeches and writings of Mazzini and Garibaldi, but also the *Bhagavat Gita* and the teachings of Vivekananda supplied them with mental *pabulam*. Their patriotism, fearlessness, spirit of self-sacrifice and their sympathy for the suffering masses were coloured by a deep religious conviction. In the course of a judgement in a political case Mr. Justice Mookerji of the Calcutta High Court remarked that "the religious principles of absolute surrender to the



Divine Will were employed by the designing and unscrupulous men, as potent means to influence unbalanced and weak-minded persons, and thus ultimately bend them to become instruments in the commission of the nefarious crimes from which they might otherwise recoil with horror."<sup>34</sup>

The learned judge was certainly wrong on at least one point. The young men and women who resorted to terrorist activities were neither unbalanced nor weak-minded. They were stronger in spirit than their enslavers and their judges.

The terrorist revolutionaries sought to advance the Indian Revolution through self-annihilation. They tried to identify themselves with the oppressed and the down-trodden. They wanted to rouse them to action by their own heroic self-sacrifice. They learned the art of bomb making. Some of them made arrangements with the German Foreign Office for secretly importing arms and ammunition. They shot a few notorious British and Indian officers. The Government retaliated by initiating conspiracy cases and unleashing brutal terror. Many revolutionaries were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Many others were executed. Some escaped to foreign countries and continued their anti-imperialist activities in collaboration with patriotic groups of Indians in London, Paris, Berlin and the U.S.A.

These groups published various journals and smuggled them into India. They exposed imperialist terror and advocated armed uprising against the British enslavers. Some became socialists and sought the cooperation and the forum of the Second International. Later, after the founding of the Third International some became communists. Some of them attended the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart in 1907 along with such eminent revolutionaries as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Jean Jaures and August Bebel. On behalf of the Indian delegation Madame Cama moved the following resolution:

"That the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interest of India and lovers of freedom all over the world ought to cooperate in freeing from slavery the fifth of the whole human race inhabiting that oppressed country—since the perfect social state demands that no people should be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of government."<sup>35</sup>

The Indian resolution was opposed by Ramsay MacDonald, the

British representative, whose ill fame is writ large in the course of the Indian freedom struggle. The majority of the delegates, however, supported it. The resolution was not put to vote on the technical ground that it was not presented in time to the Bureau of the Congress. The President of the session, however, put it on record that the spirit of the resolution was approved by the Bureau and the Congress.

Such activities of the Indian revolutionaries abroad widened the perspectives of India's struggle for freedom. The struggle for Indian freedom began to be recognized as a part of the world-wide struggle of the workers against capitalism and imperialism and for socialism.

## VII

It was against this background of national and international events that socialist ideas began to take root in India, and in 1912 the two biographies of Karl Marx came to be published. The event marked a turning point in the ideological development of the Indian national liberation movement. The very introduction of Marx to the Indian patriotic readers by the then respected revolutionary Hardayal through the influential *Modern Review*, and the heroic democratic publicist and freedom fighter, Ramakrishna Pillai, in Malayalam in the extreme south of the country contributed to the contemporary intellectual ferment. It initiated the process of differentiation between the unscientific pre-Marxian schools of bourgeois and petty bourgeois socialism and the principles of scientific socialism as enunciated by Marx in collaboration with his comrade-in-arms, Engels. These two early, perhaps the earliest, biographies of Karl Marx made the first dent, though not a breach, in Indian national thought. These two were the initiators of the process which opened the Indian door to the inflow of the ideas of scientific socialism. Subsequent developments, national and international, helped to carry the process forward.

The First World War and its repercussions, the first Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917, the new upsurge of the anti-imperialist struggle, the non-cooperative movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the new awakening among the Indian working class and the founding of the Third International by Lenin—all these helped to introduce the ideas of scientific socialism and



made Marxism an inalienable part of the socio-economic thought of India.

Since the twenties a number of biographies of Karl Marx and some of the most important books written by him have been published in the various languages of India. Yet the two earliest biographies of Marx that appeared in 1912 will, we hope, arouse historical interest even today, half a century after their publication. We present them along with our comments and the biographical sketches of the two revolutionary authors—Hardayal and Ramakrishna Pillai.

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# LALA HARDAYAL

## A Biographical Note

(P.C. Joshi)

Lala Hardayal belong to the early valiant band of Indian revolutionaries. He played a leading role among the Indian revolutionary exiles abroad but ultimately fell out with the national movement itself. His heroic life and tragic end are typical of the worth as well as the limitations of the revolutionary pioneers.

Born in the 1880s, Lala Hardayal awoke to national consciousness in the first decade of the present century. What was happening in India in which Hardayal was born and grew up? India had begun to regain a new awareness after the ruthless suppression of the 1857 national uprising. The very first revolutionary groups that emerged in India found from experience that ruthless repressive measures by the British had to be taken for granted. Tilak's incarceration during 1897 clearly indicated that the extremist national leaders had to take denial of democratic liberties as part of the situation to be faced.

Emigration to places where democratic liberties existed, became the inevitable course to follow. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Indian revolutionary exiles had built up their working centres in London, Paris, Geneva and Berlin.

It was against this background that Lala Hardayal came to the Indian political scene.

Lala Hardayal was born in Delhi on October 14, 1884 in a Kayastha family. He was educated in Delhi and Lahore and had "a brilliant academic career."<sup>1</sup> Standing first in the M.A. examination (Lahore) he easily won a Government of India scholarship to St. John's College, Oxford in 1905.

In England, he came in touch with the India House, the centre for all Indian nationalist extremists which was recently established by Shyamaji Krishna Varma who was spreading revolutionary propaganda among the students and editing the *Indian Sociologist*. In the



Lala Hardayal



India House, Hardayal met Savarkar, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and other fiery young revolutionaries and became one of them. He gave up his scholarship in 1907.

After his conversion to the revolutionary cause, Hardayal returned to Lahore in 1908 and "tried to impress his ideas on the Punjab extremists regarding true nationalism." He left for Europe in August 1908 to act as a professional revolutionary exile abroad.

The India House group became a force among the Indian students. As a retaliation against the transportation for life of Ganesh Savarkar and others in the Nasik Conspiracy Case, Madanlal Dhingra shot and killed Sir Curzon Wylie of the India Office. His own spirit and the outlook of the group are expressed in his statement before the Court: "I attempted to shed English blood intentionally and of purpose as a protest against the inhuman transportation and hangings of Indian youths. . . I believe that a nation held down by foreign bayonet is in a state of perpetual state of war, since open battle is rendered impossible to a disarmed race. . . The only lesson required in India at present is to learn how to die, and the only way to teach it is by dying ourselves."<sup>2</sup> Even Churchill conceded that these statements were among "the finest ever made in the name of patriotism."<sup>3</sup>

British reaction was relentless. Hardayal and others thought that Krishna Varma had become too cautious. But all of them had to leave the British shores to seek safety in Europe and join Madame Cama who remained as fiery as ever. A new monthly organ was started from Geneva and named after the famous Bengali journal, which had of late been banned, *Bande Mataram*. The first issue came out on September 10, 1909. Cama was the declared editor but the Intelligence biographical directory states that "Hardayal edited *Bande Mataram*." When its entry into India was banned under the Sea Customs Act, it was smuggled through the French and Portuguese settlements in India. The purpose of the journal, in its own words, was to make people "recognise that the importation of revolutionary literature into India from foreign countries is the sheet-anchor of the party—and the centre of gravity of political work has shifted from Calcutta, Poona and Lahore to Paris, Geneva, Berlin, London and New York."

It is in this period that, with the financial assistance of Madame Cama, Hardayal wrote *The Social Conquest of the Hindu Race*,



which was banned under the Press Act and the Sea Customs Act in December 1910.

During his Paris sojourn, Hardayal came into close touch with Marx's grandson Longuet. When the French police illegally arrested Savarkar and handed him over to the British authorities for deportation and trial in India, the influential French Socialist Party organ, *L'Humanite*, ran a powerful campaign to stir French democratic opinion to intervene and defend the right of asylum. *L'Humanite* always championed the cause of independence for every nation. Hardayal recalls and records with due gratitude the fraternal aid in his biographical paper on Marx:

"Modern India has a personal tie too that links Marx's name to her destiny, for Marx's favourite grandson Mr. Jean Longuet, one of the most prominent French journalists, is a strong champion of India's rights and aspirations, and always supports new India's claims in his daily paper, *L'Humanite*, of Paris. Monsieur Longuet is the son of Karl Marx's eldest daughter and used to comfort the last days of the great philosopher in the early eighties. Young India does not know the full value of Mr. Longuet's services to her cause, but time will reveal all. There is nothing hidden that shall not be made public."

Within a year or so the Paris group disintegrated. Krishna Varma was a fallen hero. Savarkar was arrested and taken back to India for trial. Madame Cama was a good symbol but not a leader. Hardayal and V. Chattopadhyaya could not agree even on the plan of work. Mutual rivalry was the hurdle. A few remained behind, but the leading revolutionaries left Paris. On September 28, 1910, Hardayal left Paris for Ras Djibuti, en route to America, where he arrived in February 1911.

In the United States, Hardayal taught Indian Philosophy at Stanford University and got in touch with various socialist and anarchist groups. He was closer to the latter. It is in this period that he seems to have got in touch with Marxism and its literature which induced him to write a biographical piece on Karl Marx. Intellectual pursuits could not contain the restless and highly political Hardayal.

Swami Vivekananda's tour had created a passionate interest in the radical, intellectual circles of America, and also encouraged migration of Indian students to that country, with fruitful results. By the time Hardayal reached America, an India House-type

movement already had been attempted. Indian revolutionaries of the eminence of Maulvi Barakatullah were active. Irreconcilably anti-British and ardently pro-Indian, the Irish-American Freeman, Editor of the *Gaelic American*, was helping Prof. Taraknath Das edit *Free Hindustan*. Its July-August 1909 issue stressed: "India will never achieve her freedom by mere political assassination." The new vision was carried forward in the March-April 1910 issue, which said: "uplift the mass to uplift the country; otherwise we will fail like the Mutiny." The paper also quoted Mazzini: "Education and insurrection are the only methods by which we can arouse the mass of the public."<sup>4</sup> A new trend of thought among Indian revolutionaries abroad was appearing, of which Hardayal's interest in Marx was a part.

The most militant part of the Indian community in the United States was the *emigré* Sikh peasantry engaged as workers in various capacities. They suffered racial discrimination at its worst, had become politically conscious, and were beginning to rally under the banner of the Hindustan Association.

After resigning from the Stanford University in September 1912, Hardayal joined the Hindustan Association as a full-time worker. It was a happy union of the politically enlightened intellectual with the mass of semi-literate or illiterate militant peasants-turned-workers abroad. He campaigned up and down all the Indian settlements. He produced his first political pamphlet *Sidelights on India* followed by a spate of others, which were regularly posted to India and the centres of Indian settlers abroad. The British banned the tracts in India.<sup>5</sup> Fraternal contacts were built up with labour organisations in the United States and with other *emigré* national revolutionary groups such as the Irish. In 1912-13, Hardayal actually became the Secretary of the San Francisco branch of the famous Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>6</sup>

After sustained efforts, a representative meeting of Indians from various centres was summoned at Astoria by Sohan Singh Bhakhna on March 14, 1913. A *Hindi Sabha*, an effective national revolutionary organisation of Indians, was formed with Sohan Singh Bhakhna as President and Hardayal as General Secretary. The headquarters of the new Party was called *Yugantar Ashram*, after the much-admired revolutionary group and journal of Bengal.

After another round of campaigning, the second meeting of the



*Hindi Sabha* was called in October 1913, and it was proposed by Hardayal and others to start a journal for revolutionary propaganda. The name proposed was true to tradition and the aim ahead, *Ghadar* (Mutiny). The first issue came out in November 1913 in English and Hindi with Hardayal as Editor. Demand for the *Ghadar* came from all sides. By April 1914 the *Ghadar* was being issued in English, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Pushtu and in Gurkhali. It was successfully smuggled into India and the various Indian settlements abroad. The tremendous popularity of the paper fixed the name of the new organization as the *Ghadar Party*.

The *Ghadar* leaders, like the Indian revolutionary exiles who were spread everywhere, clearly saw the First World War coming when in their own well-known words, "Britain's difficulty would be India's opportunity." They stepped up their preparations for armed revolt in India and expected the help of the anti-British foreign powers, especially Germany. The German immigrants in the United States already were sympathetic to the Indian cause and had established meaningful contacts with revolutionaries.

Hardayal's contact with the Left Socialists and labour groups and close association with the militant Syndicalists had provoked the suspicion and vigilance of the American authorities. The British authorities in London also were alarmed at the amazing response to the *Ghadar* propaganda and activities. The British Consul in San Francisco lodged a formal protest, the outcome of which was the arrest of Hardayal by American Immigration authorities in March 1914 as an anarchist. Hardayal then was released on bail.

The war clouds were gathering. After consultations with colleagues and supporters, Hardayal jumped bail and sailed for Europe. The *Ghadar* organisation was no more confined to the United States but had spread inside Punjab, to South East Asia and, also among Indians in British colonies in Africa and elsewhere.

When War broke out, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya was the only Indian revolutionary of eminence with political alertness present in Germany. He got in touch with the German Foreign Office and came to an agreement, which formally was in the interest of Indians. Indian revolutionary exiles, spread all over Europe and mostly in America, were summoned to Berlin, and the Indian Independence Committee was formed in early 1915.

Hardayal, at Barakatullah's suggestion, came to Berlin from Geneva on January 27, 1915.

V. Chattopadhyaya emerged as the natural leader of this Indian group and also was most trusted by the Germans. Hardayal found himself a misfit in the Berlin set-up and accepted in April 1915 an assignment to Istanbul to work with Pan-Islamist Indian revolutionaries for revolt in the Indian Army stationed in Arab countries. Unable to carry on with the virulent Pan-Islamist Indians either, an angry Hardayal left for Budapest, in August 1915.

Temperamental and individualistic as he was (the others were no less so), he fell out violently with his fellow countrymen and also with the Germans. Hardayal had virtually bowed out of the scene before the termination of the War.

In America, as the Indian revolutionary campaign was intensified and plans to smuggle men and arms into India for rebellion advanced, differences arose within the *Ghadar* leadership, in the absence of the original, dedicated, and more experienced leaders who had left for India or Europe. The situation had become bad enough to require the intervention of Hardayal, belated and of no avail.<sup>7</sup>

With the end of the First World War, the defeat of German imperialism, and the victory of the first Socialist Revolution in imperialist Czarist Russia, the world scene stood transformed and a new historic epoch opened.

Indian revolutionaries abroad saw the ignominious collapse of German imperialism, on which they had relied as an ally for active support against British imperialism. They now witnessed with their own eyes the glorious rise of a new power, Soviet Russia, against which the victorious imperialist powers, led by the British government, had organised a war of intervention to overthrow. They breathed the new revolutionary atmosphere which the Russian Revolution had created. They spontaneously were led to seek contact with the leaders of the new Soviet regime.

The first Indian revolutionary to visit the new Russia was Raja Mahendra Pratap in March, 1918. Others followed. Nothing more came out of these visits except expressions of mutual solidarity. The Indian side realised and conceded that in the new Soviet regime and leadership, the Indian Revolution had a new consistent, selfless and generous friend. The Soviet side made it abundantly clear that the cause of the Indian Revolution would



be given all the help that was possible provided the Indian revolutionaries themselves unitedly presented an agreed programme of action.

The first fruitful contacts between Indian revolutionaries and Soviet representatives began in Sweden. Towards the end of the War V. Chattopadhyaya had the wisdom to set up a branch of the Indian Committee in neutral Sweden. Some Left Socialists of Europe, mainly Dutch and Swedish, took the initiative to call an International Socialist Conference in Stockholm during 1917. V. Chattopadhyaya and a small Indian delegation including Dr. Bhupendranath Dutt rushed to Stockholm from Berlin in 1917, causing concern to the British.<sup>8</sup> There the Indian revolutionaries met delegates who became leaders when the Communist International was founded—Angelica Balabanova (first General Secretary of the Communist International), Karl Radek (the second General Secretary) and K.M. Troinovsky (important functionary both in the Party and diplomatic apparatus). The Indian leader shared, first hand, the ideas and the perspective of the Russian Bolsheviks. Troinovsky stayed behind until the Socialist Revolution succeeded in Russia. Very friendly with Indian revolutionaries, he went back not only with the good wishes of his Indian friends but also with their demand to do something for the Indian cause. He did his fraternal duty. He informed Chattopadhyaya in the summer of 1918 that a Russo-Indian Association had been formed in Moscow and again in September that an Oriental Seminar was going to be established in Moscow. Troinovsky called on some one from the Indian side to come over and help organise.<sup>9</sup>

Hardayal was the obvious person from India. He had earned the reputation of being a good scholar in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy, and he had political experience. He was a dedicated revolutionary, and though difficult to work with, nevertheless a comrade-in-arms. Summoned to Stockholm, he came but did not go to Russia. It is an exciting speculation how different Hardayal's own career and contribution to Indian Revolution would have been if he had gone to Moscow then. Hardayal, however, followed an opposite course.

During the second half of the war years, the frustrated Hardayal had taken to brooding over his conflict with his Indian comrades and German allies. In such tragic circumstances the victim of subjectivism goes down the incline. This happened with Hardayal.

Instead of going to Soviet Russia to advance the cause of the Indian revolution, he decided to renounce all his connections with the Indian struggle itself. On March 14, 1919 the *Times* published a letter from him expressing him repentance and faith in the British Empire.<sup>10</sup>

Hardayal went to England and wrote "Forty months in Germany and Turkey, February 1915 to October 1918" (1920). "He recounted his war-time experiences with some distaste, describing the Germans as 'semi-barbarous.' He argued that in the age of violence, when the weaker countries of Asia could not maintain their independence, English or French Imperialism was a thousand times preferable to German or Japanese Imperialism." He concluded that England had "a moral and historical mission in Asia."<sup>11</sup> Hardayal had made a hundred and eighty degree turn. The rest followed as a matter of course.

He joined the School of Oriental Studies, London University, conducted research on religion and philosophy, propagated for the rest of his life what he called "Constructive Humanism," with the ultimate aim of a secular world state. Hardayal turned out to be the earlier edition of M.N. Roy who also began as a terrorist revolutionary, rose to become a famous Communist, and after expulsion from the Communist ranks ended up in the arms of "Radical Humanism" and anti-Communism. The phenomenon is familiar in the Indian movement, a part of its trials and tribulations.

It is relevant to re-read what the contemporary press thought of the reported change in Hardayal's attitude. The popular *Paisa Akhbar* of March 9, 1919 wrote: "Apparently his letter on the subject was written when the signs of German defeat became pronounced. It is difficult to say what his views would have been if Germany had proved victorious in the war. At all events the change is remarkable and it is gratifying to learn that Hardayal asserts to have parted with the revolutionaries and joined the Home Rulers." The *Virat* of March 9, 1919 wrote: "Truth cannot remain hidden for long. Hardayal and others have been deceived by the Germans but they have now learnt the truth and have had to admit their mistake in plain words."<sup>12</sup>

Hardayal committed the same mistake but the others realised the truth. And the very *Ghadar* Party that Hardayal had helped to found enabled them in another way to go on advancing the cause of



Indian revolution. While Hardayal learned nothing from the mistake, his comrades-in-arm profited by it. For example, Chattopadhyaya, who like Hardayal in his Paris days had come in contact with Marxist, Socialist and Anarchist groups and who in his Berlin days had kept in touch with German Marxists and in Stockholm had taken the initiative to seek contact with the Russian Bolsheviks, became a communist. He pioneered the work that led to the foundation of the League Against Imperialism. In its first Congress at Brussels, 1926, he was elected the League's Secretary. India was represented by Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Indian National Congress became associated with the organisation. The League became for some years an active forum of an anti-Imperialist United Front and organised world-wide anti-Imperialist solidarity campaigns. Chattopadhyaya died a martyr's death in the worst days of the Stalin terror. Again the *Ghadar* Party came nearer and nearer to the Communist International, sent delegates to its World Congress, and for two decades continued to supply trained cadres to work in the Communist Party of India.

Hardayal tried to get rid of his political past but his homesickness grew. He applied to the British Indian Government for permission to return home but the British rulers did not trust him. Indian circles continued to take a sympathetic interest in Hardayal. In the Indian Legislative Assembly during 1937, an Indian member, Shamlal, referred to an earlier statement by the Home Member in the Council of State that Hardayal would be allowed to return "if they were assured on good authority that he had totally renounced the creed of violence and if he gave an undertaking that he would not participate in revolutionary activities." He asked if Government's attention had been drawn to the statement of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, dated September 17, 1937 published in the *Tribune* of September 19, 1937 that "whatever he (Hardayal) may have been in the past I do not think he is a revolutionary any longer and I would strongly urge that whoever else may or may not be allowed to come back, no hindrance should be placed in his way."

The official answer was a curt "Government is making inquiries". Bhai Parmanand pressed with supplementaries only to draw the answer from the British Civilian Home Secretary, J.A. Thorne, "I have already said that we are in touch with the India Office to verify the main statement made, which is to the effect that Mr. Hardayal has entirely changed his attitude." The report of a petty

civilian from the India Office and of purblind Intelligence men from London carried more weight with the British rulers in India than that of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, no revolutionary himself, and no irreconcilable enemy of Britain either. Such was life under the British rule in India.<sup>13</sup>

Hardayal had to stay in England. He went on a lecture-tour to America and died in Philadelphia on March 4, 1939, a heart-broken man.

Lala Hardayal's life had two phases. The first was that of a heroic dedicated revolutionary, and the second, that of a bourgeois scholar, the very course he had voluntarily renounced in the beginning. How could this contradiction be explained? Lala Hardayal had refused to learn from his own and his comrades' collective experience and to march with the times, in step with the world revolutionary movement.

Hardayal collapsed as a revolutionary for two reasons. His first mistake involved an inaccurate world view—the traditional bourgeois nationalist mistake of regarding the enemy of an enslaver as a natural ally. In Hardayal's time, this led to alliance with Germany locked in war with Britain. Hardayal's personal experience with German militarism along with the defeat of Germany and its allies by Britain and its allies led to the destruction of his ill-founded hopes and to bitter disillusionment.

Hardayal's second mistake related to the tactics he advocated and pursued—conspiracy among the Indian soldiers, resort to individual terrorism, and assumptions about the spontaneous support of the Indian masses. The failure of the localised *Ghadar* uprising during the First World War already had been a shattering blow to his hopes.

These two miscalculations, an inaccurate world view, and an incorrect tactical course of action, ushered Hardayal out of the national struggle. He lacked the humility and the patience to escape the errors in his thought and practice. He opted out of the active anti-imperialist movement, but not so his colleagues and above all the *Ghadar* Party he had helped to found. They maintained a steadfast course.

The lessons they derived from their experience, which was also that of Hardayal, contradicted his approach to politics. These lessons strengthened their understanding and kept them active in the movement. The first lesson was that no rival Imperialist



power could be India's real ally and that world Imperialism as a whole was the enemy of India. The reliable international ally was the international anti-imperialist movement and above all the first consistently anti-Imperialist power emerging from the First World War, the Soviet Union. They tested the anti-imperialist credentials of the new Soviet State and were the first to embrace it as India's good ally. This was a basic change in their political outlook. Again their new-found admiration for the Soviet Union led them to study the experience of the Russian Revolution. This exploration in turn led to a change in their tactics, a shift from reliance on mere conspiracies and acts of individual terrorism to the broad path of building the united Anti-Imperialist Front, educating, organizing and drawing the revolutionary masses into the anti-Imperialist struggle. Hardayal's comrades-in-arms and the *Ghadar* Party thus kept the flag flying and helped to contribute something new to the Indian struggle against Imperialism.

The period ending with the First World War and the victory of the Russian Revolution, led by Lenin and his party opened a new epoch in world history, an epoch marked by the retreat of imperialism and the advance of revolutionary forces the world over. A new model of successful revolution had been demonstrated and stabilised, a new revolutionary state established which has become a super power. The new ideology that inspired this revolution and the strategy and tactics adopted to achieve it became a new source of inspiration and a subject of serious study for objective analysis and practical emulation by revolutionaries, whether in capitalist countries fighting for socialism or in the enslaved colonies fighting for national independence. This happened in every country of the contemporary world. The consequent transformation was widespread. The U.S.S.R. is no longer the lone socialist power—one-third of the world has become socialist. India in 1947, ceased to be a British colony. Likewise numerous other countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are independent though beset with their own problems. Colonialism has been pushed out of a dominant position though it is still capable of exploiting these countries' problems and creating trouble.

The course of the Indian revolutionary movement has proved that only those old revolutionaries who learnt from the experience of the Russian Revolution and applied the needed corrective to their old outlook, strategy and tactics survived in active national

revolutionary movements or became communists while the rest fell out of the ranks or lived on their past. Lala Hardayal, who began in a very promising manner and made great sacrifices, unfortunately ended as one of the dropouts of the Indian Revolution. His is a sad tale which has a moral for Indian revolutionaries. The Indian revolution has yet to be carried forward.

### A Note on Hardayal's Marx

Hardayal's sketch of Marx was published in 1912 in a widely circulated and influential monthly journal, the *Modern Review*. This sketch is among the earliest biographies of Marx published in India, the other being Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai's in Malayalam, which also is being published in this volume. Hardayal was a scholar-turned-revolutionary in exile, seeking new sources of inspiration for the Indian revolution. He thus came to learn about Marx and was moved to write on him. It is obvious from the contents that he was deeply moved by the example of Marx's life dedicated to the revolutionary cause. What makes Hardayal's adulation of Marx important, as a historical document, is that he did not accept Marx's basic ideas. This was the limitation of the times in which he lived, of resurgent India's intellectual and political horizons, as reflected in Hardayal's own thought. What contributes to our understanding of the development of India's historical national tradition is that as early as 1912 an eminent Indian intellectual and a rising revolutionary leader like Hardayal hailed the founder of scientific socialism, Karl Marx, as a "Modern Rishi", "a saint and seer", high tribute indeed, in Indian traditional idiom. Moreover, the most influential national monthly of the period, liberal in outlook, published and gave the article wide publicity.

Hardayal writes in very moving words about the personal life of Marx and his family, who, guided by total dedication to the cause of socialism led a life of great poverty. Inability to pay the modest house rent led to Marx being thrown out on the streets. Lack of means to buy the modest daily needs of the family led him to the pawnbroker's shop and to his consequent humiliation. Such were the wants and suffering of the family that the fond parents had to go through the agony of seeing their two children die of starvation and of lack of medical care. Hardayal's account supplemented by Jenny Marx's vivid description of the poverty and



the quiet heroism with which they faced it, is extremely moving. Jenny was a worthy wife and a true comrade-in-arms of Marx who helped him to keep going with his work.

Summing up Marx's life, Hardayal asks the challenging question: "Some one must suffer that the world may be helped. Reader, will you be that one?" Hardayal called to the youth of his time to join the national revolutionary movement with Marx's self-sacrificing life as a model. In our time, Marx's ideas are better known, and socialism is the accepted national aim of India. Hardayal's challenge to India's youth acquires greater validity sixty years after it was first posed.

Hardayal was familiar with and admired Marx's revolutionary work. But he did not understand its historic significance nor indeed the far-reaching changes in the contemporary European scene. The failure of the 1848 Revolution in Germany, followed by the collapse of the French Revolution, and the background of the decline and fall of the Chartist Movement in Britain, had demonstrated that the leading sections of the bourgeoisie in these major European countries betrayed the cause of popular democracy and had gone over to the other side. They came to an alliance with the reactionary rulers of the old order so as to get a chance to run their respective countries in their own selfish class interests.

Marx began as a revolutionary democrat, active in the revolution of his own country, and after its failure, was forced into exile. The leaders of the temporarily victorious revolutionary France invited him to Paris, and he went there with new hopes. The victory of reaction in France again forced him into exile in Belgium. Such was the newly-acquired influence of the reactionary rulers of Germany that they got the Belgian government to order Marx to quit. Again he went into exile, this time to London and lived and worked there until his death.

This failure of the democratic revolution in Europe, of which he was an eye-witness and an active participant, led to a qualitative change in the thought and work of Marx. From a militant and consistent revolutionary democrat, he groped his way to discover the principles of scientific socialism and formulated and publicised them. He not only became the founder of scientific socialism but also of the Socialist Movement and the Party in his own and other European countries. Later with the establishment of the First International, he laid the foundation of the International Socialist

Movement.

As we shall see later, Hardayal did not agree with the basic ideas of Marxism, and that is why he did not see the significance of his advance from revolutionary democracy to socialism. Hardayal was a national revolutionary with a bourgeois outlook. His approach towards Marx could, therefore, only be pragmatic. Hardayal's pen picture of Marx, simply chronicled events with sympathy and in appreciative words.

Hardayal describes the heroism of Marx's early revolutionary phase and how after his arrest in February 1849, when he was brought to trial, he used the court-room as a political tribune, educating the jury on the evil of Prussian autocracy and winning his release.

It is also noted how the then German Chancellor, Bismarck, realizing the worth and rising influence of Marx, sought to bribe him by exploiting his family situation of acute want and how he ignominiously failed.

Hardayal goes on to describe how Marx used his years of exile to get in touch with working class militant groups and clubs, German exiles, French and British political activists. Marx became familiar with their experiences, problems and aspirations and spoke to them of his revolutionary ideas. This is how the *Communist Manifesto* was written and published on February 24, 1848, the very day the republican revolution broke out and King Louis Philippe fled Paris.

Hardayal describes the founding of the "International Workingmen's Association", later known as the First International, and the significance of its rapid rise in influence. In Hardayal's words: "Its greatest value lay in its effort in promoting the unity and solidarity of the working-class in various countries. Marx's battle-cry, 'Workingmen of all countries, unite!' reverberated throughout Europe." Hardayal approvingly quotes the *London Times*: "Since the time of the establishment of Christianity and the destruction of the ancient world one had seen nothing like this awakening of labour."

Hardayal, however, is totally wrong while describing the chronic controversy that became a factor in transferring the headquarters of the International to America.

He writes: "There was also a split between the pacific and constitutional sections represented by Marx and the violent



revolutionary wing led by the Russian philosopher Michael Bakunin." Hardayal's own fanatical faith in violence against British Imperialist domination was understandable. This led him to spontaneously sympathise with the anarchists in Europe and in America and to find in them kindred souls. Marx's ideas were characterised as "constitutional" and "pacific" by the anarchists alone. Marx was a consistent but realistic revolutionary. He was no mad anarchist who believed in violence at all times and in all circumstances. A scientist and no fanatic, he was wise enough to indicate and to utilise the useful democratic rights under bourgeois democracy. He also was sufficiently clear-headed to outline its limitations in the struggle for the establishment of the rule of the working people. Unlike the anarchists, he did not believe in violence as a principle. Rather, he related violence to the existing political set-up and the course of development of the proletarian and working people's movements and the attitude of the bourgeoisie in the final phase of the struggle.

Hardayal seems to have been familiar with Marx's writings, and it is worth noting Hardayal's own estimate of them in order to gain insight into his own attitude towards Marxism: "Marx's literary activities were immense. He wrote articles, pamphlets, letters, treatises and manifestos to further the movement. Some of these productions were merely polemical pamphlets against various opponents, and were not worthy of Marx." These pamphlets were undoubtedly polemical, and Marx considered them necessary in the interest of building the socialist movement on realistic and scientific ideas, which alone could keep the movement going. They provided a strategy, tactics and a clear-cut perspective which showed that the movement was in the true interest of the working people and in tune with the forward march of history. Marx's journalistic and polemical writings were directed against the remnants of the woolly ideas of Utopians and the new reformist concepts bred under bourgeois parliamentarianism. He also opposed the harmful and rather disruptive ideas of the anarchists who had become a big roadblock after the failure of the 1848 revolutionary phase and its aftermath. These polemical writings of Marx were very useful in as much as they helped to nurse and train the pioneers of the world socialist movement. These new leaders became equipped with the ideology of scientific socialism, which enabled them to build socialist parties in their respective countries. Hardayal's own ideo-

logical sympathies and also most of his contacts were with the anarchists. Naturally he considered Marx's effort to deflate the anarchists by his sharp, principled polemics "unworthy of Marx."

Marx's writings, however, were not all polemical, nor meant to serve the needs of the moment. Most of his writings were of a positive and enlightening nature, based on his scientific discoveries and of abiding ideological value. Hardayal admits this and writes: "His small book on Price, Value and Profit and his larger work, *A Critique of Political Economy* are of permanent value. But, the great work on which his fame chiefly rests is *Das Capital* (Capital) which has been called the Bible of Socialism . . . a *Shashtra* in itself. It has been the intellectual armoury of the Socialist campaign in all countries."

Hardayal's own acquaintance with Marx's scientific works was superficial as indicated in how he sums up "the ideas and theories that Marx gave to the world." He frankly admits that he "did not attach much importance to these theories" and regarded them "as one-sided and defective."

Hardayal begins with a real howler: "Marx was not a philosopher in the sense that he attempted to find an answer to the ever present question of whence and whither, that has baffled the minds of men since they began to think." Actually Marx began his academic life and was soon regarded as a brilliant young Hegelian, a promising philosopher. Marx's first intellectual revolutionary effort was to break with the reactionary past of Hegel's thought (Idealism) to carry forward its sound core (dialectics) and to develop the concept of dialectical materialism. He discovered a useful philosophical basis for scientific socialism and thus made it a creative force in the realm of thought. That in turn contributed to the conscious development of a revolutionary mass force in life to lead humanity from capitalism to socialism.

It is from dialectical materialism that Marx came to evolve the laws of historical materialism as he began thinking of the course of the social development of humanity and analysing the contemporary social realities under the new system of capitalism. It has been the traditional intellectual device of bourgeois scholarship to vulgarise Marx's historical materialism into economic determinism and then to attack it. Hardayal easily falls into this bourgeois scholarly trap. He characterises the materialistic concept of history as "only a half-truth." In formulating his own views he is worse,



antediluvian, even by contemporary standards of scholarship: "Human history is moulded by natural environments and by man's will. Carlyle's theory of civilisation as a product of personal influence is much nearer the truth than that of mechanical scientific evolution advanced by Marx and Spencer . . . History reveals no law or process or even a tendency. Change is the only law discernible there. The rest is chaos, which great men try to turn into cosmos." Hardayal is enthralled by the very familiar idea of "great men" and individual "heroes" being the real makers of history—understandable from an Indian national revolutionary, with faith in individual terrorism, but poor evidence of a serious study of Marx's ideas.

In line with this approach is Hardayal's treatment of Marx's "theory of class-struggle." Hardayal asserts: "I repudiate the idea that society is divided into classes by any hard and fast line of demarcation. It is not class selfishness but social cooperation based on the appreciation of a higher ideal that has been the motive force of progress in all epochs." However, he concedes that "class-struggle is only one part of the whole drama."

Marx outlined the main line of demarcation in capitalist society in terms of two decisive contending classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Their struggle in actual life was conducted by the bourgeoisie uniting all the reactionary classes and doing everything to retain their traditional influence over the masses. The bourgeoisie also disrupted the unity of the opposite front headed by the proletariat, allied with the peasantry, the forward-looking intelligentsia of the middle classes. In his historical writings Marx vividly outlined and analysed this phenomenon in his time. Subsequent history right down to the contemporary period has demonstrated the validity of Marx's ideas of class-struggle, linked with the needed and inevitable class-alliances as constituting the motive force of historic developments. Ideas like Hardayal's are still heard as the ideological cannonade from the other side.

Hardayal concedes that Marx's analysis of surplus value was "the soundest part of his work in the province of pure theory." This, however, is not without qualification, or else his whole critique of Marx's ideas would have collapsed and Hardayal would have become India's first pioneering Marxist. Hardayal adds this comment: "Marx's exposition of value is open to grave objections from the standpoint of orthodox political economy. *There can be no scien-*

*tific theory of value under the present absurd regime.*" (Italics Hardayal's own). His outlook is revealed in the following: "I am not much interested in the stupid economics of a stupid system . . . I know the working men and peasants are sweated and deprived of their dues; I know that the manufacturers and landowners fatten at their expense; I know that society suffers enormously by leaving production to selfish greedy capitalists." The revolutionary hero Hardayal and his kith and kin came to the conclusion that all this suffering must end and by their heroic example and efforts, they must usher in a new society—Communism!

He asks the question: "But what is this Communism which Marx loved so much?"

Hardayal provides a simple answer, "Communism is simple affair. It declares in the first place that land should not belong to one man, family, or corporation but to the whole community collectively . . . Further Communism lays down that private capital shall be abolished and money-power along with it." Hardayal considers 'money', the mere means of exchange, the dominant factor in the capitalist system.

Hardayal had a childishly enthusiastic vision of an egalitarian society, in line with the old Utopian tradition of Socialism that existed before Marx. Again, the only reference to the State power in the new system is the naively brief phrase that it will be "administered by a universal republican state for the benefit of all."

Marx's ideas are now widely familiar in India. Knowledgeable readers will recognise that Hardayal's description of "Communism" has nothing in common with Marx's ideas but very much so with those of the anarchists. Marx developed his ideas of scientific socialism, worked out the strategy and tactics of the social revolution for making the transition from capitalism to socialism, and became the founder-father of the world socialist movement by conducting a life-long ideological-political-organizational struggle against the fanatical anarchists on the one hand and the diversionary reformist parliamentarians on the other.

Marx was no Utopian or fanatic. He was a creative social scientist, and simultaneously an active social revolutionary. His was an integrated life of theory and practice linked together.

Marx forecast the doom of capitalism, but also warned that the end of capitalism would not be automatic. It would need the maturing of both objective and subjective factors. On the objective



side, when capitalism fails to function normally but moves from crisis to worse crisis it would be obvious that the system has failed. On the subjective side, when the mass of the working people come to realise from their own experience that life has become intolerable under the old order and the conscious socialist elements acquire the wisdom and the strength to exploit the inevitable internal crisis of capitalism, they would lead and organise the rising mass discontent, headed by the working class, allied with the peasantry, and other revolutionary democratic forces, into a successful revolutionary assault to end the capitalist order.

The successful Socialist Revolution does not lead from the hell of capitalism to the heaven of communism in one heroic leap, as Hardayal naively supposes. Marx had visualised two distinct phases, first the establishment of the socialist order where it will be "to each according to his work" and then the beginning of the second, transition to a Communist Society which can and will ensure "to each according to his want."

Experience has taught, however, that it is easier to make the Revolution than organise a socialist order. The old shattered and mis-shapen economy has to be dealt with and a completely new economic system built. The crying demands of the consumers have to be met while increasing production and strengthening the economy, all along the line—and this on the basis of new production relations. Trials and errors inevitably follow until the knowledge is acquired how to run the socialist economy better than the capitalist economy.

The dethroned capitalists will not accept their defeat gracefully but make tireless efforts to stage a comeback. Marx foresaw this. He insisted on smashing the State apparatus of the bourgeoisie and installing a new type of State power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, authoritative dictatorship against the bourgeoisie, to ensure the defeat of all its counter-revolutionary efforts. Authentic democracy for the mass of the working people would inspire and teach them how to run the new system in their own interests and to defend their newly-acquired State power, the guarantor of all their rights. Hardayal ignores all these basic ideas of Marx, which stabilise and consolidate the aims of the Socialist Revolution.

Marx had forecast what the experience of U.S.S.R. has demonstrated. Fifty years after their Socialist Revolution the Soviet Union is claiming to have completed the building and consolidation of

socialism in USSR and has begun to make the transition towards Communism.

Hardayal obviously gave no serious thought to these vital new ideas of Marx which have shaped the course of history. Hardayal's inability to assimilate Marx's ideas is only an evidence of his own intellectual limitations and of the intellectual climate in contemporary India. What is important to note is how much of Marx he accepted and respected. Therein lies the real value of his pamphlet. Hardayal wrote in loving, almost adoring and moving words about Marx as a dedicated scholar and tireless revolutionary, with indomitable courage and unshakable convictions, facing an exile which was of one of endless suffering and self-sacrifice. He was supported by his equally dedicated wife and devoted friend and comrade-in-arms, Engels. Marx's life could not but move the readers of Hardayal's pamphlet.

Hardayal did make some ignorant criticism of Marx's ideas but his estimate of his intellectual contribution as a whole was positive. Despite his critical attitude, Hardayal showed deep insight when he summed up Marx's intellectual and practical contribution in the following words:

"Marx was a benefactor of humanity, because he was the first thinker of modern Europe who had faith in the working-classes. Socialists before him fancied that communism was a boon to be conferred by the refined and educated philanthropists on the poor ignorant labourers. They thought it would come from above . . . His great appeal was addressed to the hearts of the working men, to the latent manhood in them, of which they themselves were not conscious: 'Workingmen of all countries, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain.' Years have passed by; men have come and gone; but this passionate cry of the leader who believed in the ignorant and dirty labourers still raises them to the full level of manhood. Such insight is given only to men who have suffered for a cause: it does not come to arm-chair reformers or learned professors preaching from the snug comfort of the study."

Hardayal's critical comments disappeared with the wind because they were wrong and had proved untenable. His positive ideas and glorification of Marx made a deep impact on his contemporaries, his readers. His paper was first published in the *Modern Review*, March 1912. Later it was re-published as a pamphlet by



Natesan or Ganesan, Madras. I tried to contact top Punjabi intellectuals and revolutionaries of those days to discover if they had come across Hardayal's pamphlet in their early youth and what impact it had made on each one of them. The first I contacted was Major-General S.S. Sokhey. He was enthusiastic as he described how electrified he felt when he read Hardayal's *Marx* as a young student. When he went to England for further studies, he went out of his way to get hold of Marx's writings to study and kept it up all his life. Sokhey was a government scholar and later joined the Indian Army's Medical Service. He became the first Indian Director of Haffkine Institute, Bombay. Bound as he was by government service rules, he could not popularise Marx's ideas publicly but used them for his scientific research which paid dividends for the country. After retirement, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru got him nominated to the Rajya Sabha as an M.P. and gave him the mission to negotiate the supply of medical and surgical plants from the Soviet Union. General Sokhey, who also headed the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, fulfilled the task with credit and took a progressive stand throughout his public life.

Among the social scientists, I met Dr. Gyan Chand, the oldest national economist alive. He also admitted that he had read Hardayal's *Marx* as a student and been moved to study Marx in the original. He was perhaps, the first among Indian intellectuals from academic circles to declare himself a Marxist in the early 20s, when he joined the Banaras Hindu University as a young lecturer. In addition, he popularised socialist ideas publicly both inside and outside the University. He has taught and influenced three generations of Indian economists who have come out of Banaras and Patna universities. He became India's first Economic Adviser after Independence, and represented India on the World Bank and other bodies. He proudly informed me that he has preserved a copy of Hardayal's pamphlet on his book-shelf.

My most exciting talk was with Baba Sohan Singh Bhakhna, the first President of the *Ghadar* Party of which Hardayal was the General Secretary in 1913. During my three days' stay with Babaji in his village of Bhakhna in 1965, Babaji talked long, both enthusiastically and sadly about Hardayal. "He (Hardayal) was a good man and a well-read intellectual, while we Sikh peasant members of the *Ghadar* Party were illiterate or semi-illiterate." He described how they all felt inspired when Hardayal talked to them about

Marx and his ideas in the Yugantar Ashram, headquarters of the *Ghadar* Party, where all the full-time functionaries of the Party lived together on a commune basis. Babaji sadly commented: "Hardayal not only forgot Marx but left the Party and got out of the Revolutionary Movement but we could not forget Marx." He described the failure of the 1915 *Ghadar* Revolution and how after the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the leaders of the Party, left unengaged in the United States of America, contacted the newly-founded Communist International under Lenin, whom they recognised as the true disciple of Marx and built fraternal relations with it. After due education most of them became active members of the Communist Party of India. Babaji himself and some other *Ghadar* leaders were at that time serving life-term sentences in the Andamans and suffering barbarous tortures. After bitter struggles they obtained slightly better facilities, were able even to smuggle the works of Marx and Lenin from India and became Communists.

Despite its failings Hardayal's pamphlet is not only a part of the national revolutionary legacy of India but it is a contribution that helped many serious intellectuals and consistent revolutionaries to find their way to Marxism and hence to meaningful work.

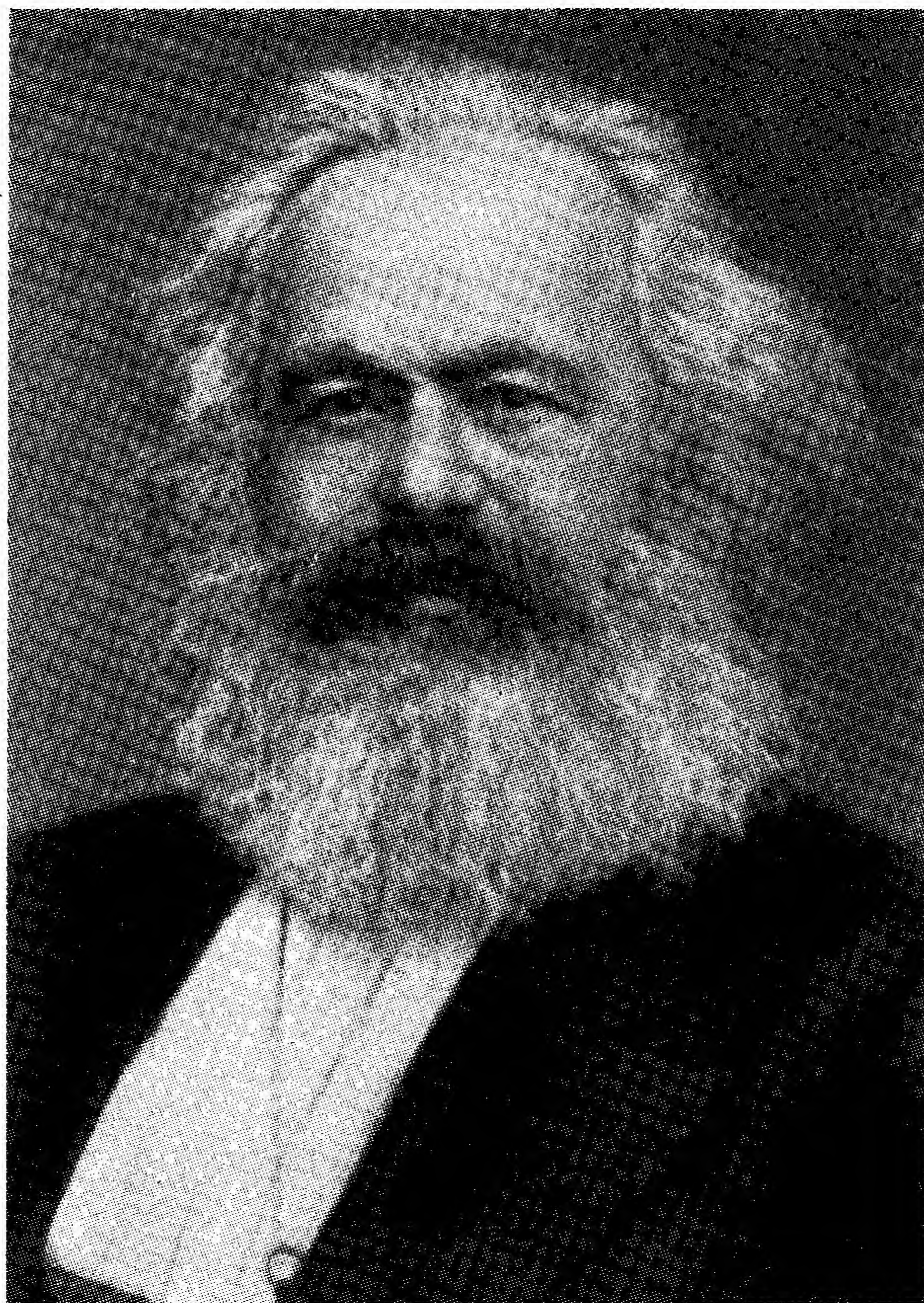
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Karl Marx

## KARL MARX : A MODERN RISHI\*

(Lala Hardayal)

"And unto the poor, the Gospel is preached."

(St. Mathew)

In this short essay, I propose to tell young India the story of the life and work of a great European *Rishi*, a saint and sage, whose name is revered today by millions of men and women in all countries of the West. Such a study will show us that saintliness does not consist only in repeating religious formulae and singing hymns, and that the hardest *tapas* can be performed out of a penance grove and without sitting in the midst of four burning logs of wood under the burning sun. It will also lead us to the discussion of vital problems of human welfare and set us thinking. It will teach us not to confine ourselves to the writings of Kanada and Kapila, Sankaracharya and Ramanuja in our search for wisdom, but to turn to the great modern thinkers for guidance in our social, moral, intellectual and political difficulties. Modern civilisation has been built up by the devoted labours of a group of heroes and heroines at the head of vast numbers of energetic people, and Marx is one of this coterie of thinkers and workers, whose names are household words in Europe.

Modern India has a personal tie too, that links Marx's name to her destiny, for Marx's favourite grandson, Mr. Jean Longuet, one of the most prominent French journalists, is a staunch champion of India's rights and aspirations, and always supports new India's claims in his daily paper, *L'Humanite* of Paris. Monsieur Longuet is the son of Karl Marx's eldest daughter, and used to comfort the last days of the great philosopher in the early eighties. Young India does not know the full value of Mr. Longuet's

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services to her cause, but time will reveal all. There is nothing hidden that shall not be made public.

We shall understand Karl Marx's life and doctrine better, if we try to put ourselves in a reflective mood first. We shall then be able to see the world as it appeared to him. Each of us views the world from his particular angle. To the preacher, the world is full of sinners: to the cobbler, it is full of shoes that require mending; to the king, it is full of subjects. And thus every one lives in a world of his own. Karl Marx regarded the world from his own standpoint, and we must comprehend it before we can profit by his great work.

Karl Marx devoted his life to the solution of the problem of poverty. Poverty is an evil of the first magnitude all over the world. It is the curse of the race. It blights moral growth and dwarfs the intellect. It is the root of slavery and disease. It has been the enemy of progress and civilisation from the earliest times. Now poverty may be due to various circumstances. It may be the result of geographical and meteorological conditions as in Siberia, Greenland and Arabia. It may be caused by over-population as in China. It may be aggravated by ignorance of the principles of agriculture, as in India and Mexico. It may be the consequence of political disorder and chronic social unrest, as in the republics of South America. It may be the necessary outcome of political conditions, as in medieval France and some regions of Asia. Or it may be due to the economic conditions of production and distribution, as in modern Europe.

These causes of poverty are not mutually exclusive. A people may be tormented by drought and locusts, fleeced by money lenders, plundered by feudal lords, and robbed by bandits in one and the same country. But scientific study requires a complete analysis of the different causes, which are not mutually connected by a tie of essential relationship, though they may exist simultaneously.

Karl Marx did not deal with all the causes of poverty that have been enumerated above. He confined himself to one phase of the questions. He asked himself, "Why are the mass of the people in modern Europe so poor and miserable?" And he chiefly concentrated his attention on those countries in which the factory system had been established in the last quarter of the eighteenth century or later.

Thus Marx was not a philosopher in the sense that he attempted to find an answer to the ever-present question of whence and whither, that has baffled the minds of men since they began to think. He was not a moral teacher or a religious enthusiast, nor was he prepared to offer a satisfactory synthesis of all the forces and phenomena of life for the guidance of humanity. He was a gleaner in one field. He chose a modest work and applied all his energy to its completion.

The problem of poverty has been before the world ever since the first monera sprang to life in the depths of the ocean. Does not Darwin inform us that nature does not produce sufficient food for all the creatures that are born? Thus our scientific commanders tell us that the commissariat arrangements of the world are woefully defective. Animals live in a state of chronic famine and consequent civil war.

Man too was in a similar condition in the primitive epochs of his history. Hunting was his sole source of food, and he was the prey quite as often as he was the hunter. But with the advent of the pastoral stage, the condition of things changed. And when the miracle of agriculture was wrought, giving man one thousand grains in place of one and thus feeding multitudes with a handful of corn long before the alleged feat of Jesus, man's poverty was a thing of the past. Plenty reigned everywhere.

But fate was mocking his hopes. For now we have to solve this great riddle: How is it that man has been in an abject state of poverty even after the discovery of agriculture? Far back as we may go, we find the majority of men in the grip of vile poverty—Greece, Rome, China, Persia, and all other nations of antiquity saw this horrid spectacle, and remained silent. The philosophers of India did not condescend to attend to it. They lived on the corn of the peasant, and then turned round and blamed him for his attachment to such gross material things as crops and cattle. They did not see that all philosophy is ultimately dependent on manure. So illogical a position surprises one who reflects on the severely rationalistic spirit of Hindu philosophy. A system of philosophy that does not deal with economics is like a tower without foundations. For it is clear that a man must be born and then must eat and grow before he can attain *mukti*, *nirvana*, salvation, perfection or any other goal that religion may propose for him. Modern Europe recognises this truth, and Marx has put the



whole world under a debt of gratitude by pointing out the fundamental importance of economics in human history.

Just as humanity was baffled by poverty even after agriculture had filled her granaries, so she has eaten dry crusts and worn rags even after the remarkable inventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have increased man's productive powers a hundred-fold and made nature a humble vassal of his will. How is that while the world is rich, the people are so poor? This was the problem that Marx wished to solve for modern Europe, where poverty had no right to exist, as science had improved agriculture and industry beyond the wildest dream of the Utopia builders of the past. But the people of Europe were in Marx's time sunk in wretched poverty, and the same state of things exists now. For Marx is not so far removed from us. He was born in 1818 and died in 1883.

The educated classes of India have no idea of the horrible destitution of the mass of the people in Europe. The Mogul Emperors, in their pride of power, carved on the walls of the palace of Delhi the romantic legend: "If there is a Heaven on Earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." And as I walked about the slum quarters of Paris and New York, the old reminiscences awoke in my mind with an altered refrain: "If there is a hell on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." Let the young men of India reply why one man like Andrew Carnegie can give away £ 36,000,000 in charity, while forty-four persons, who were arrested as vagrants the other day in New York, had only Rupees 5 among them for all their worldly belongings. How is it that England is the richest country in the world but full one-third of the English people live on the verge of starvation year in and year out? How is it that while English exports and imports are increasing by leaps and bounds, many workmen have to cut their children's throats and commit suicide every winter, because they have nothing to eat? How does it come about that while the rich idlers are going so far afield as Biskra, Algiers and Khartoum for their holidays, the poor people are dying of consumption by thousands for lack of proper food and fresh air? How does it happen that while the sun never sets on England's vast empire, it also does not set on her filthy slums? All these questions troubled young Marx's mind day and night, and he resolved to sacrifice his life and a brilliant career to help the working men of Europe out of the soul-destroying disease-

breeding poverty in which they dragged on their wretched existence. It would be an error of language to say that they lived.

But that is not the whole of this great problem. Let us try to think why the idlest persons in the world are the richest. Why should a coolie who works all day earn only 3 annas, while a shareholder of a cotton mill earns an annual dividend of hundreds of rupees, though he may sleep away the whole time? How is it that the farmer, who feeds the whole world, cannot feed himself? How is it that the peasant, who toils in rain and sun is always poor and in debt, while the village moneylender grows fat and rich by sitting cross-legged in his shop and writing something from time to time in his ledger? How do you explain the strange anomaly that the man who risks his life in getting a pearl from the bottom of the ocean in the Persian Gulf, never wears it himself and never becomes wealthy, while the merchant who sells that pearl in Bombay or Calcutta lives in a stately mansion and enjoys all comfort and social esteem? How can you account for the fact that the working men, who bring all the coal out of the mine in England or India, will always remain the same dirty, poor, despised beggars that they are now, while the shareholders of the companies that sell the coal will rise from millionaires to multi-millionaires and from multi-millionaires to billionaires as time passes by, while they have never seen the mine, and in many cases do not even know where it is? How is it that the hardest and the most dangerous kinds of labour are the worst paid in *all* countries of the world? These awkward questions must be answered somehow or other.

In ancient times, people did not see the way out of this maze. So they preached charity to the rich, and patience to the poor, with the consolation of heaven thrown in as a reward of poverty in this world. Thus Jesus saw clearly that Dives and Lazarus represented an unnatural state of things, but he could only threaten Dives with hell-fire and cheer Lazarus with the prospect of sitting in Abraham's bosom after death. At the same time, the ancient philosophers recommended cynical renunciation and self starvation. Wealth is fleeting, it cannot be equally and justly distributed; it cannot be kept safe against the avarice of kings and the skill of burglars. So they resorted to the heroic remedy of abolishing it altogether. But they could not carry out their precepts in practice, for the only logical outcome of their doctrine was suicide for all



and everybody. They loudly condemned all economic activity, but lived on the fruit of other people's economic exertions. They mistook an impossible and stupid retreat from the field for a great victory. Even the ascetic, who ate only a grain of rice every day, did consume a certain quantity of rice in order to live and show his contempt for all rice-cultivators. Thus the ancient world only suggested foolish remedies, and could not diagnose the disease. The problem of the inequality of material conditions bewildered it, and it ran away in haste. Some tried to ascribe these evils to the deeds of a former life. But the modern world seeks some less recondite explanation of the phenomenon. It takes the bull by the horns instead of fleeing before it. No saint or philosopher can live on ideas or divine grace. No amount of virtue will save a man from consumption or the plague, if he is ill-fed and weak. Transcendental philosophy has feet of clay, like Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, for the natural needs of the body afflict saint and sinner alike, and even the *Vedanta* cannot flourish without a certain *modicum* of protein, carbo-hydrates, and water within twenty-four hours. For shame! For shame! What vulgar worldliness it is to connect salvation and *mukti* with wheat and lentils! But facts are facts, and I never read of a philosopher or religious idealist, who could live on air or logic. Thus the old solutions of the perennial problem of poverty were entirely inadequate and ridiculous. Let us see how the modern world grapples with it. And let us study Karl Marx's contribution to the intellectual treasures of the human race in this province. (Karl-"Charles".)

Karl Marx was born on Tuesday, May 5, 1818 in the German town of Treves. His father was a lawyer of repute, and had been converted from Judaism to Christianity early in his career. Karl was the brightest of his sons, and the fond father formed great hopes of his future career. Karl was sent to the universities of Bonn and Berlin to study philosophy and jurisprudence and qualify for a profession. The romantic lad wrote poetry and planned some novels, but found that poetry was not his vocation. He turned to philosophy and became a follower of Hegel, though he maintained a very critical attitude and finally rejected the idealistic element of the Hegelian system. He passed through a period of painful intellectual and spiritual unrest, the storm after which all great spirits find the calm of settled convictions and purposes in life. But his idealism annoyed his father very much, and we find the old Jew

addressing grave remonstrances to the philosophically inclined son on his imprudence in neglecting his worldly prospects. The successful man of the world wished his son to be like himself. It is pathetic to read in one of his father's letters the following sermon on the importance of money:

"Complete disorder, silly wandering through all branches of science, silly brooding at the burning oil-lamp; turned wild in your coat of learning and unkempt hair... Only on one subject, I am still in the dark as to your views, and on that subject you are shrewd enough to keep silent. I mean that cursed gold, whose worth to a family man you do not seem to grasp at all... though you unjustly claim that I do not know, or do not understand you."

Karl did not mend his ways, and even wrote a thesis that would certainly have lost him his doctor's degree, for which he had worked so many years. His revolutionary ideas had made him unpopular with the authorities, and his chance of securing a professor's chair were very small indeed. His father's disappointment at seeing his son wander away into the thorny paths of politics and philosophy can be better imagined than described. His mother too felt the loss keenly as she had cherished the hope that her dear Karl would win wealth and rank by means of his rare intellectual gifts. Little did she dream that he would pass his life in exile and poverty, and that his remains would rest far from the family vault in a humble grave across the water. But the struggle between paternal solicitude and youthful idealism is not an uncommon occurrence. Every young philosopher was not blessed with a philosopher for his father. India too knows this domestic strife, which makes one home dark but spreads light over the land. Is not Buddha the great exemplar of this eternal conflict? Karl too was born to wring his parents' heart with sorrow, but to give to the world great tidings of joy. He who belongs to himself cannot belong to the family: he who dotes on the family cannot work wholeheartedly for the world. Some one must weep in order that all may laugh. This rule of vicarious suffering holds good under all circumstances.

In 1843, Karl married Johanna Bertha Julie Jenny von Westphalen, a beautiful lady who had been the playmate of his



childhood, and who fully reciprocated his tender affection. It was a social sacrifice for her to marry Karl, as she came of a rich and noble family, while Karl was a penniless graduate. But love is stronger than the world. The marriage was a happy one, and Jenny stood by her husband in all his trials and troubles till death parted them 38 years later. Brave as Karl Marx ever was, his wife was braver still, and there is no doubt that her love and gentleness cheered and soothed him in his exile and bitter poverty. As we shall see, Jenny loved the cause of the working-classes as passionately as Karl, and sacrificed two children with as much heroism as any Abraham offering Isaac to God, or Agamemnon immolating Iphigenia for the public good.

In 1842, Marx adopted political journalism to earn his livelihood and disseminate his political ideas. Germany was at that time ruled by a wretched despotic bureaucracy, at the head of which stood the King of Prussia. There was no popular liberty. The constitutional movement of the early nineteenth century had left no permanent results behind. The numerous petty states were governed in the same manner, though sham constitutional assemblies existed in some of them. All the advanced thinkers of Germany were engaged in a campaign against this despotic and irresponsible system of government. Karl took his position in their ranks, and his brilliant contributions to the "Rhenische Zeitung," (The Rhenish Gazette) attracted much attention. He was made editor-in-chief, and conducted the paper with great courage and skill. His sledge hammer blows directed against the government soon drew down the wrath of the police on him. In April 1843, the paper was suppressed. Marx wrote to Ruge, his friend and collaborator: "The cloak of radicalism has fallen, and the almighty despotism stands naked before the eyes of the entire world." Ruge replied: "The entire press of Germany could not, on account of one or two officials, nor even the King, be suppressed . . . If the opposition in the publishing world wishes to open new battlefields, it must do so outside of Germany."

Marx saw that he could do nothing within the country. He had become interested in the French writers, who preached communism as a cure for the poverty of the working-classes of Europe. He also grew discontented with the mere political Liberalism, which did not include economic measures for the relief of the poor peasants and working-classes in its programme. He resolved to

study economics and the theories of the French communists. So he left Germany and went to Paris—that Mecca of all lovers of freedom, the centre of knowledge and art, liberty and achievement, the mighty moral workshop of the world. With his arrival in Paris began a new period in his life.

He became the editor of a new radical journal, the *Vorwaerts*, published in Paris to further the German political movement. He continued his trenchant attacks on the Prussian Government. The Prussian bureaucracy took alarm, and requested the French Government to suppress the paper. Tyrannical governments are always very obliging to one another, and France was at this time governed by a corrupt monarchy under Louis Philipe. In January 1845, M. Guizot, the French Minister, expelled Marx and the other contributors of the journal from Paris. Marx went to Brussels with his wife and child, and met other German political exiles who were living there. His three years' stay at Brussels brought him into touch with associations of German communists, and first gave him an opportunity of allying himself with the forces of communism on the continent. He established a German Workingmen's Club, and secured the editorial control of the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* a radical paper published by German exiles. He lectured to workingmen on the principles of political economy, and carried on an extensive correspondence with the radical leaders of France and Germany. He also tried to organise the various scattered communist societies in one great league. He entered into relations with the German Communist Club of London, and induced its members to transfer their headquarters to Brussels, so that the movement might have the benefit of his personal guidance. He then established a Communist League, and wrote a manifesto which is to this day famous as *The Communist Manifesto*, of which you shall hear more anon.

The *Communist Manifesto* was brought from the printers on February 24, 1848, and on the same day the world learned that a republican revolution had broken out in Paris and that the King of France Louis Philipe had fled from Paris in disguise. M. Guizot, the Minister who had expelled Marx from Paris in 1845, also sought safety in foreign parts. A Provisional Government was established, and a Republic was proclaimed.

Meanwhile, the Prussian Government had been trying to persuade the Belgian authorities to expel Marx from Belgium, but with no



success. At last, in February 1848, the spread of communism among the working-classes frightened the Belgian Government, and Marx was arrested and ordered to leave Belgian soil at once.

But fortune favoured him this time, for the revolution in France had left the way clear to Paris. In fact the French Government, through one of its members, had begged "the brave and loyal Marx" to return to the country whence "tyranny had banished him, and where he like all fighting in the sacred cause, the cause of fraternity of all peoples" would find welcome. Marx spent some months in Paris, and returned to Germany to start a democratic newspaper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of Cologne (*New Rheinisch Gazette*). The first issue of the paper was published on June 1, 1848. Marx's friend Engels wrote about his brief stay in Paris:

"I saw Paris again, during the short fleeting weeks of the republican delirium, in March and April, when the workers ate during the day their dry bread and potatoes, and at night planted 'trees of liberty' in the boulevards, had displays of fireworks, and sang the Marseillaise, and when the bourgeoisie hid themselves in their houses and sought to assuage the rage of the populace."

The *New Rheinisch Gazette* was no more popular with the Government of Germany than its predecessor, which had been suppressed in 1843. In the course of the summer of 1848, a Democratic Congress was held at Cologne; Marx took an active part in its proceedings. Albert Brisbane, an American Socialist, was also present at it, and left a pen-picture of Marx at the Congress, from which we quote the following:

"I found there Karl Marx, the leader of the popular movement. The writings of Marx on Labour and Capital and the social theories he then elaborated, have had more influence on the great socialistic movement of Europe than those of any other man. . . He was just then rising into prominence; a man of some thirty years, short, solidly built, with a fine face and bushy black hair. His expression was that of great energy, and behind his self-contained reserve of manner were visible the fire and passion of a resolute soul. Marx's supreme sentiment was a hatred of

the power of capital, with its spoliations, its selfishness, and its subjection of the labouring-classes. . . As I remember that young man uttering his first words of protest against our economic system, I reflect how little it was imagined then that his theories would one day agitate the world and become the important lever in the overthrow of time-honoured institutions. How little did the contemporaries of St. Paul imagine the influence which that simple mind would produce on the future of the world. Who could have supposed at that time that he was of more importance than the Roman Senate or the reigning Emperor—more even than all the Emperors of Christendom to follow? In modern times, Karl Marx may have been as important in his way as was St. Paul in his."

The heavy arm of the German Government was not long in falling on the intrepid journalist and political "agitator". On February 7, 1849, Marx and other colleagues were tried on the charge of having libelled the public prosecutor and some constables in certain comments on their official actions. Marx conducted his own defence and spoke for about an hour. His speech was really an indictment of the ministry. He concluded it with these memorable words:

"Not only does the general situation in Germany, but also the state of affairs in Prussia, impose upon us the duty to watch with the utmost distrust every movement of the government, and publicly to denounce to the people the slightest misdeeds of the system. . . In the month of July alone, we had to denounce three illegal arrests. . . It is the duty of the press to step forward on behalf of the oppressed and their struggles. And then, gentlemen, the edifice of slavery has its most effective supports in the subordinate political and social functionaries that immediately deal with private life—the person, the living individual. It is not sufficient to fight the general conditions and the superior powers. The press must make up its mind to oppose *this* constable, *this* attorney, *this* councillor. What has wrecked the March revolution? It reformed only the highest political class, but it left untouched all the supports of this class—the old bureaucracy, the old army, the old courts, the old judges—born, educated and worn out in the service of absolutism. The first duty of the press is now to undermine all the supports of the present political state."



The defendants were acquitted by the jury. But two days later, on February 9, 1849, Marx and his associates were again tried for inciting armed resistance to the King's authority. This was a much more serious affair. Marx made a brilliant speech in his defence, and the jury who again brought in a verdict of not guilty, sent one of their members to thank him for the very instructive lecture that he had given them! In May 1849 there were risings in Dresden and other places in the Rhine provinces. The patience of the Prussian Government was now exhausted. Marx was ordered to leave Prussia and the *Gazette* was suppressed by administrative order. The last issue of the paper appeared on May 19, printed in red ink and containing a stirring "Farewell" poem.

Marx again left his native land and went to Paris. What happened next can best be described in his wife's words. Her diary gives us a vivid record of the daily sufferings of the household on account of their harrowing poverty. Here is one extract from it:

"We remained in Paris a month. Here, also, there was to be no resting place for us. One fine morning the familiar figure of the sergeant of police appeared with the announcement that Karl 'et sa dame' (and his wife) must leave Paris within twenty-four hours . . . I again gathered together my small belongings to seek a safe haven in London. Karl had hastened thither before us."

Marx arrived in London toward the end of June, 1849, and in July their fourth child, Henry, was born there. Speaking of this event, Mr. J. Spargo, the learned biographer of Marx, says that the child was;

"cursed from birth by the black monster of poverty and doomed to the early death which is the fate of so many thousands of poor children.

This boy died early in 1852, a victim, or rather a martyr of poverty. Mr. Spargo rightly says:

"It was the first time that death had visited the humble home, and the blow fell upon the parents the more heavily because they knew that their little one, who had sucked blood from his

famished mother's breasts, was literally slain by poverty."

The family was reduced to the most gnawing poverty, almost to destitution, during their first few years in London. Bread was often the only food they had, and Marx had to forego his share of it to let the children eat a full meal. He would go and study in the British Museum, faint from hunger and cold. He earned a little by writing ill-paid articles for reviews. The struggle was bitter indeed. Once he applied in a railway office for the position of clerk, but was rejected on account of his bad handwriting! It will be remembered by posterity that one of the greatest German philosophers and writers could not become even a railway clerk! Later he was appointed London Correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, and was paid £ 1 a week for his services. This sum was for months the only income of the family. Indian readers, who have visited England, can imagine how a family could live on this pittance. Even the technical scholars of the Government of India get £ 3 a week (of course including college fees). The couple lived in two rooms, one of which was the sleeping room, while the other served as kitchen, study and drawing-room. Illustrious visitors found Marx in these humble lodgings, as they came to pay their respects to him or ask his advice on important questions of politics and social organization. We shall quote from Mrs. Marx's letters some extracts describing their life in London:

"Nobody can say of us that we ever made a noise about what we for years have sacrificed and had to endure; very little, or never have our personal affairs or difficulties been noised abroad . . . to save the political honour of the paper (the *New Rheinisch Gazette*) and the civic honour of his friends, he allowed the whole burden to be unloaded on his shoulders, all the income he sacrificed, and in the moment of his departure he paid back the salaries and other bills—and he was expelled by force from the country. You know that we did not keep for ourselves; I went to Frankfurt to pawn my silver-ware, the last we had; at Cologne I sold my furniture . . . you know London and its conditions well enough. Three children and the birth of a fourth! For rent alone we paid 42 thalers a month . . . our small resources were soon exhausted . . . The keeping of a wet nurse for my baby was out of the question, so I resolved to nurse the child myself, in spite of the constant terrible pains in the breast and the back.



But the poor little angel drank so much silent worry from me that he was sickly from the first day of his life, lying in pain day and night . . . so I was sitting one day, when unexpectedly our landlady stepped in, to whom we had paid 250 thalers during the winter, and with whom we had a contract to pay after that the rent to the owner of the house. She denied the contract and demanded £5, the sum we owed for rent, and because we were unable to pay at once, two constables stepped in and attached my small belongings, beds, linens, clothes, all, even the cradle of my poor baby and the toys of the two girls, who stood by crying bitterly. In two hours, they threatened they would take all and everything away. I was lying there on the bare hard floor with my freezing children . . . The next day we had to get out of the house. It was cold, raining and gloomy. My husband was out hunting for rooms. Nobody wanted to take us in, when he talked of four children. In the end, a friend helped us. I sold my bedding to satisfy the druggist, the baker, the butcher and the milkman, who got scared and all at once presented their bills. The bedding was brought to the sidewalk, and was loaded on a cart. We were able, after the selling off everything we possessed, to pay every cent. I moved with my little ones into our present two small rooms in the German Hotel, I, Leicester Street, Leicester Square . . . Do not believe that these petty sufferings have bent us. I know only too well that we are not the only ones who suffer, and I rejoice that I even belong to the chosen privileged lucky ones, because my dear husband, the support of my life, yet stands at my side."

It would be a sacrilege to add any comments on this story of a wife's heroism told by herself.

In the spring of 1852, the afflicted couple lost their infant girl Francisca, who was born the year before. The mother's diary records the terrible destitution of the family at this time. Here is an extract, which shall surely one day figure in the acts of the Apostles of the Bible of Emancipated Labour in time to come:

"On Easter of the same year—1852—our poor little Francisca died of severe bronchitis. Three days the poor little child wrestled with death. Her little dead body lay in the small back room: we all of us went into the front room, and when night came, we

made our beds on the floor, the three living children lying by us . . . . The death of the dear child came in the time of our bitterest poverty. Our German friends could not help us . . . In the anguish of my heart, I went to a French refugee who lived near and who had sometimes visited us. I told him our sore need. At once with the friendliest kindness, he gave me £2. With that we paid for the little coffin in which the poor child sleeps peacefully."

At this time, too, occurred the amusing incident which has immortalised a pawnbroker who was too zealous for the rights of property. It happened that Marx wanted to pawn some old silver spoons, which his wife had inherited as heirlooms from her aristocratic ancestors and which bore the crest of the House of Argyll. The pawnbroker's suspicions were roused, when he saw his ragged German client in possession of such precious wares, and he wanted to have him arrested by the police. It was with some difficulty that Marx escaped arrest after offering the necessary explanations to the police. We know that pawnbrokers figure in the biography of Mazzini too. Evidently Europe owes much to those despised custodians of other people's goods, for the movement of freedom was helped out by them at the most critical periods of the lives of its heroes! Marx also used to borrow small sums at the exorbitant rate of 20 to 50 per cent for interest! This shows how capitalism, represented by its meanest hirelings, unconsciously wreaked its vengeance on its bitterest enemy, who was labouring to abolish rent, interest and profit from the face of the earth. Once or twice Marx even thought of going into business, as he could not see the suffering of the little children. But the brave wife dissuaded him from this step, which would have been a severe blow to the movement. She encouraged him to adhere to his literary work, and thus saved him from the grievous error that he wanted to commit. In a letter to Mrs. Wedemeyer, dated March 11, 1861, Mrs. Marx wrote:

"The first years of our life here were bitter ones, but I will not dwell on those sad memories today, on the losses we suffered, nor the dear, sweet departed children, whose pictures are engraved in our hearts with such deep sorrow . . . Then the first American crisis came, and our income was cut in half (from



the *New York Tribune*). Our living expenses had to be screwed down once more, and we had even to incur debts . . . And now I come to the brightest part of our life, from which the only light and happiness was shed on our existence—our dear children. The girls are a constant pleasure to us, owing to their affectionate and unselfish dispositions. Their little sister, however, is the idol of the whole house . . . A most terrible fever attacked me and we had to send for a doctor. On the 20th of November, he came, examined me carefully and after keeping silent for a long time broke out into the words: 'My dear Mrs. Marx, I am sorry to say you have got the small-pox—the children must leave the house immediately.' You can imagine the distress and grief of the entire household at this verdict . . . I had scarcely recovered sufficiently to be able to leave my bed, when my dearly beloved Karl took sick. Excessive fear, anxiety and vexations of every sort and description threw him upon his sickbed. But, thanks heaven, he recovered after an illness of four weeks. In the meantime, the *Tribune* had placed us at half-pay again . . . To you, my dear friend, I send my warmest regards. May you remain brave and unshaken in these days of trial. The world belongs to the courageous. Continue to be the strong faithful support of your dear husband, and remain elastic in mind and body . . . Yours in sincere friendship, Jenny Marx."

In these simple notes, we see the whole situation at a glance—the little household, racked by poverty and sickness, haunted by worry and care, but lit up with the light of love and resounding with the laughter of lovely children. All that the heart could give to take the sting out of misfortune and daily privations was vouchsafed in the most abundant measure. And they were happy, the great thinker and his devoted wife, who knew her duty so well, and discharged it with such constancy. Often they would walk up and down the room, hand in hand, singing German love-songs as they used to do when they were young—far away in the old country, beneath the summer trees in bloom.

"O woman ! in our hours of ease,  
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,

When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou."

In spite of such hardships, Marx always refused to accept any remuneration for his lectures on political economy to the working men of London. He was resolved to take nothing from the poor labouring class, whose servant he had made himself. It was during those years of strenuous struggle against adverse circumstances that Bismarck, the German Chancellor, tried to offer Marx an indirect bribe in order to wean him from the people's cause and undermine his influence in the movement. It was a clever move, but it failed. Bismarck employed Marx's old comrade, Bucher, who had gone over to the side of the Government and now enjoyed Bismarck's entire confidence. Bucher had kept up friendly relations with Marx even after accepting his official appointment. He wrote a carefully-worded letter to Marx, dated October 8, 1865, in the course of which he said :

"The 'Staats Anzeiger' ('The State Intelligencer') desires to obtain regular monthly reports concerning the movements of the money market . . . No limitations are set regarding the length of articles . . . kindly wire whether you agree to undertake this, and what compensation you desire . . . *Progress will have changed many times before it dies; therefore he who wishes to serve the nation during his lifetime must rally round the Government.*" (The italics are ours).

The sting of the letter is in its tail. The concluding sentence discloses the real object of this bid for Marx's literary work. But Marx saw through the scheme. He knew that dependence on the Government even as an independent contributor to an official organ would place him in a very equivocal position before his followers. He did not desire to have anything to do with a Government newspaper, even as a reporter of the movements of the money market. He therefore refused the offer, though he was in such pressing need of financial relief. But he would not earn money at the sacrifice of even the slightest interests of the movement. He put even the shadow of principle before his personal necessities. For in this case, he was conscientious to a very nice degree indeed. Bismarck's round-about plan of bribing the leader of the people's



party thus fell through.

In 1864, Marx, in conjunction with other comrades, established the International Workingmen's Association, which wielded much influence in the politics of Europe for six or seven years. Mazzini was a delegate of the Italian workingmen, but he withdrew from the Society after some time, as he did not agree with all its principles and methods. This remarkable association has had the good fortune to be known in history simply as "The International", a word which acts like a charm even now on the ardent spirits of France, Italy and Switzerland. It held annual congresses in various towns and formulated resolutions and programmes. But its greatest value lay in its effort in promoting the unity and solidarity of the working classes in different countries. Marx's battle-cry "Workingmen of all countries, unite" reverberated throughout Europe. *The Times* said of the movement that "since the time of the establishment of Christianity and the destruction of the ancient world, one had seen nothing like this awakening of labour." The leaders of the associations were persecuted by several governments, but its power grew greater every year. At last, the Franco-German War of 1870-71 and the disturbances of the Commune of Paris destroyed its usefulness by depriving it of its most active members and frightening its other supporters. There was also a split between the pacific and constitutional section represented by Marx and the violent revolutionary wing led by the Russian philosopher, Michael Bakunin. The upshot was that the association languished, and was finally dissolved in 1876.

Marx's literary activity was immense. He wrote articles, pamphlets, letters, treatises, and manifestos to further the movement. Some of these productions were mere polemical pamphlets against various opponents, and were not worthy of Marx. Others, like his small book on *Price, Value and Profit*, and his larger work, *A Critique of Political Economy* are of permanent value. But the great work on which his fame chiefly rests is *Das Kapital* (capital), which has been called the "Bible of Socialism." The first volume was published by Marx in his lifetime. The second and third volumes were completed from Marx's notes by his friend, colleague and disciple, Friedrich Engels, after his death. Friedrich Engels' devotion to Marx forms one of the brightest episodes in the story of socialism. His generosity relieved Marx of the petty cares that had embittered the early years of the philosopher's sojourn in England.

Engels' name is inseparably associated with that of his great friend. And no one thinks of Marx without thinking of Engels too. The book *Das Kapital* is a bulky tome, it is quite a Shashtra in itself. It has been the intellectual armoury of the socialist campaign in all countries. Marx was very sad that he could not finish it before his death.

In 1881, Marx lost his beloved wife. On March 14, 1883, he too passed away, sitting in his armchair, with a smile on his lips. He had suffered much from illness during the last thirteen years of his life. Overwork, bad food, worry and mental strain had shattered his constitution. Liver trouble and insomnia, the inevitable companions of all thinkers on their journey through life, had undermined his health for many years. Ill-health is the penalty of intellect. Rousseau, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Comte, and so many other philosophers have had to fight against it every day of their life. Marx could not evade this law. He was buried in Highgate Cemetery, where his wife already reposed in peace. A few years ago, it was proposed to erect a monument to his memory over his grave. One of his disciples wrote at the time: "Marx's monument exists already—not in hammered brass or sculptured stone, but in human hearts. The whole international socialist movement is his monument, and each new victory of the socialist forces raises it higher."

Let us now turn to the ideas and theories that Marx gave to the world, besides his own personality and that of his heroic wife. I am one of those who do not attach much importance to these theories, and regard them as one-sided and defective. Their usefulness consists in supplying the justifiable aspirations of the labouring-classes with a nominal theoretical basis. Rousseau's theory of a social contract was historically and logically untenable, but it served to establish the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, which was the crying need of the times. Even so Marx's theory of the class-struggle and his theory of value are not very accurate or convincing, but they represent the present practical ideal of the working-classes and harmonise with it. Hence they must enjoy great popularity. As Prof. William James said, a theory is only a tool to work with.

I shall speak of Marx's three chief ideas before passing on to a brief exposition of the practical aspect of communism. Marx holds that economic conditions exercise an *almost* absolute influence on



mankind, moulding its political institutions, and even its religious and literary life. Methods of production lead to great changes in the entire social structure, and in ideas and ideals.\* This view is called the '*materialistic conception of history*'. It is only a half-truth, but Marx put it forward almost as the whole truth. It follows that society obeys certain laws of evolution, which depend on industrial conditions. Social evolution is therefore analogous in many respects to biological and physical evolution: it is governed by immanent laws, which must be discovered. We should work in harmony with these irresistible tendencies that are inherent in society and push it forward. This conception of social evolution is fatalistic, and in this respect resembles that advanced by Herbert Spencer. I only state this view in order to disagree with it. Society is not an agglomeration of molecules, and man is not a machine. Social evolution is not a continuous process. There is no law of social progress visible anywhere. Human history is moulded by natural environments and by man's will. Carlyle's theory of civilisation as a product of personal influences is much nearer the truth than that of mechanical scientific evolution advanced by Marx and Spencer. Marx admitted the potency of social choice in evolution, but he regarded the "laws" of progress as predominant and gave a secondary position to human volition. This interpretation of history is vicious and misleading. History reveals no law discernible there. The rest is chaos, which great men try to turn into cosmos.

The second doctrine with which Marx's name is connected is *the theory of the class-struggle*. History is a record of class-struggles, and these struggles have been the great revolutionary force in the past. The *Communist Manifesto* says:

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterupted, now hidden, now open fight . . . Our epoch of the bourgeoisie (i.e. the middle classes), possesses, however, this

\*F. Engels says in the introduction to the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848—"In every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, had the social organisation necessarily following from it, from the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch."

distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society, as a whole, is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."

Thus Marx elevated one phase of historical evolution to the rank of a universal law. There have been classes and classwars: but that is not the essence of history, nor indeed its mainspring. Class-struggle is only one part of the whole drama. And I repudiate the idea that society is divided into classes by any hard and fast line of demarcation. It is not class-selfishness, but social co-operation based on the appreciation of a higher ideal that has been the motive force of progress at all epochs. Marx himself changed his tone later, when he attempted to secure the co-operation of the middle-classes in the "International". This theory of classes was a dangerous boomerang indeed, for many workingmen argued that Marx should be expelled from the movement, as he was not of their class: he was a "bourgeois" (middle-class man)! Thus do false theories come home to roost.

Marx's third achievement in the field of social philosophy is *his analysis of surplus value*. Marx saw that the capitalist grows rich, because he pays the workingmen less than the full value of the product that they manufacture. His profits represent the surplus value, of which he robs the working men. Marx has displayed much ingenuity in developing this idea, which seems to be the soundest part of his work in the province of pure theory. But I am not much interested in the stupid economics of a stupid system. And Marx's exposition of value is open to grave objections from the standpoint of orthodox political economy. *There can be no scientific theory of value under the present absurd regime*. On this point, I cannot speak with much certitude, for I do not like to wallow in all the filth and mire of the present predatory economic system. I know that the working men and peasants are sweated and deprived of their dues: I know that the manufacturers and landowners fatten at their expense: I know that society suffers enormously by leaving production to selfish greedy capitalists.

Indian readers will now ask, "But what is this communism which Marx loved so much?" Communism is a very simple affair. It declares in the first place, that land should not belong to one man, family or corporation, but to the whole community collectively.



For land is the source of food, clothing, fuel and medicine. The earth is really our mother. If some men take possession of it to the exclusion of others, these latter must become the slaves of the landowner for bread. The landowners may also use the land for selfish purposes; they may make parks for their pleasure; they may cultivate beetroot for their profit while the community wants wheat; they may leave it to their sheep and cattle, while men are perishing of hunger. Thus private property in land leads to slavery, poverty and social strife. Land is no man's property.

This natural law was understood by all communities in the early stages of their history. But strong and wily men arose, and appropriated large tracts for their own use. Then they compelled others to work for them and called them "tenants". Communism aims at making land the property of the whole community, held and administered by a universal republican State for the benefit of all. The welfare of all is the highest law.

Further, Communism lays down that private capital shall be abolished and money-power along with it. If you think for a moment, you will see that money is a great magician indeed. If a man accumulates Rs. 50,000, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to the fortieth generation can live comfortably on the interest of the money without doing any work at all, and the original sum will remain intact all the time. Is this not some juggler's feat? Again, take a merchant who has Rs. 10,000. He buys many maunds of ghee (clarified butter) from all the village-producers, and sells it in town, thus making a profit of, say, Rs. 2,000. He repeats the process several times, and at the end of some years, he is a lakhpati (owner of Rs. 100,000). Now consider that this man has done absolutely no work of any kind.\* He simply paid the villagers who produced the ghee, and then sold the ghee to the retail dealers of the town; he remained sitting in his shop all the time. All his good fortune is due to his possession of Rs. 10,000 to start with. Now what is the secret of this strange power of money? How do interest and profit spring from money so suddenly and spontaneously? Again take the case of a manufacturer, who buys certain shares in a factory. He never goes to see the factory: he may be ignorant of its whereabouts. He may go on a tour round the world. But his shares bring him a hand-

\*Is that true? Editor: *Modern Review*.

some income all the same at the end of the year. How do you explain this curious fact? And side by side with these advantages for the possessors of money go many disadvantages for those who do not possess it. For the labourers who work in the factory, the villagers who produce the ghee, the small shopkeepers who sell it to the people, the engineers who keep the machinery going, all these men, who do the whole work, always remain poor and hungry, and what is worse, dependent on the goodwill of the employers and the wholesale merchants. How is this? It is simply the wonder-working power of money. Money is the goose that lays the golden eggs. The more we think, the more the conviction is forced on us that money has been one of the most disastrous inventions of the human mind. Humanity has committed suicide with this weapon. The first man who issued a coin was guilty of treason to the race. When a poor man jingles a coin in his pocket, he is like a prisoner playing with his fetters. For it is this device of gold, silver, leather, or nickel currency that has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It is the coin that enables a thrifty or crafty man to command the labour of others, and make them his servants. Communism therefore first communalises land; but that is only half the solution of the problem. It next proceeds to abolish private capital, and money, which is the policeman of capitalism. Capital is always represented by money; so many rupees, or pounds sterling. No man can accumulate fish or bread or fruits in order to enslave others afterwards, for all articles of food are fortunately perishable. That is a very beneficent provision of Nature indeed. But the invention of currency enables one man to lay up a store of coins, which are like so many cartridges to be used in his war against others. Later, the coins give place to paper. But the essential principle is the same. Private property in land leads to exchange—exchange requires money: money in its turn becomes an article of private property, and thus can be used to exploit others. So the process goes on. St. Paul said: "Love of money is the root of all evil." For money is the cause: love of money is largely an effect. So long as money exists, most men will love it, in spite of all sermons and warnings. When despotic monarchy existed, men were bound to intrigue for power. Its abolition has also cured mankind of the love of intrigue, for an appetite feeds on its object. In countries where titles of nobility exist, love of rank is widespread. In America and France, no one thinks of rank



now, because there is no rank to be had. Thus money itself intensifies that passion for its possession, which has been so much deplored by all religious preachers.

So long as proper food, clean lodgings, recreation and even medicine are to be got only with money, men will hanker for it, for poverty is not merely a misfortune under the present system; it is equivalent to a sentence of death. When men had to defend themselves against the assaults of the violent, and every man had therefore to carry a gun on his shoulder or a sword in his belt, it was impossible to persuade society that the love of weapons was a sin. For the love of weapons was the result of the love of life and health. And no religion will, or should, eradicate the natural healthy instincts of joy in life and physical well-being. Instead of suppressing the love of life and health, we should destroy the enemies of life and health—germs, dirt, poverty, mutual violence and other similar pests. The ancient religious teachers fought backward in the search of social welfare: we fight forward. They said, "Don't love money. As life and health depend on money, don't love life and health." We say: "Abolish money, and make the best of life and health, which will no longer depend on money."\* Thus Communism is an important and indispensable factor in the moral progress of mankind. Religious teachers who neglect economics build on sand. Economic arrangements exercise a profound influence on moral life—and Marx is entitled to our gratitude, not because he explained the relation of economics and vastly exaggerated its importance. Then idealists began to examine his theories and found that there was a substratum of truth in them. Thus Marx has indirectly helped the art of ethics too by his fanaticism for economics.

I have contented myself with mentioning only the central principles of Communism, so as to show how it attacks the great evil of private property in land and capital, with its brood of money, rent, taxes, interest and profit. Production and distribution are to be carried on by a universal republican State, and the products divided justly and equally\*\* among all citizens. This ideal was

\*All this sounds very plausible, but we cannot conceive how civilised existence would be possible without some sort of money. —Editor: *Modern Review*.

\*\*We do not understand how "equal" distribution of products can be just. For supposing private capital and private property in land were abolished, would all men even then be equally intelligent, skilful and industrious, so as to be entitled to an equal share of products? Editor: *Modern Review*.

preached by Marx: of course he had his own pet notions about details, like every other communist thinker. But the fundamental doctrine is the same. Minor differences are not important.

Karl Marx's greatest work was not the publication of treatise on capital, or the composition of numerous pamphlets, or even the establishment of the various associations which he founded and dissolved in his lifetime. He may have thought that this activity was his chief claim on the gratitude of the world. But we can estimate the value of his work better. Few great men know themselves. Marx was a benefactor of humanity, because he was the first thinker of modern Europe who had faith in the working-classes. Socialists before him fancied that communism was a boon to be conferred by the refined and educated philanthropists on the poor ignorant labourers. They thought it would come from above. This idea is still found among such bodies as the Fabian Society of England or "Christian Socialist" associations. Marx was the first man to lay down the formula that the emancipation of the working-classes must be achieved by themselves. "He who would be free, himself must strike the blow." His great appeal was addressed to the hearts of the working men, to the latent manhood in them, of which they themselves were not conscious: "Working men of all countries unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain." Years have passed by; men have come and gone; but this passionate cry of the leader who believed in the ignorant and dirty labourers still raises them to the full level of manhood. Such insight is given only to men who have suffered for a cause; it does not come to arm-chair reformers or learned professors preaching from the snug comfort of the study. Marx had to pass through poverty and want himself before he could learn that the highest moral impulses lie buried beneath the ragged clothes and the dirt-begrimed countenance of "the man in the street." In all epochs of social change, this is the great service that a leader renders to the people. He teaches them to believe in themselves by telling them that he believes in them. This is the secret of all moral reform. When Jesus healed a man of disease, he asked him, "Dost thou believe in me?" But when he healed a man of moral weakness, he said: "I believe in thee." He did not say these words, but his actions spoke louder than words. Buddha said to the barber: "Yes, you can come with me." And the barber's heart at once rose to the height of the call, merely



because the master thought him worthy. Rousseau told the oppressed, ignorant and timid serfs of eighteenth century France that they were worthy of sovereignty. It sounded like mockery. But lo! The words awakened all the sleeping manhood within them, and these rough unlettered half-starved slaves of the nobles became valiant, self-respecting citizens within one generation. Muhammad said to the Arabs: "You can conquer the world." And so they did. The great man, who perceives that all men, even the rudest and the poorest, are capable of the highest moral growth, is the saviour of society. He knows the essence of human nature. He evokes power in those who are apparently weak; he makes heroes out of the scum of the earth. And therefore was Jesus a friend of publicans and sinners, a leader of fishermen and outcasts and erring sisters. Therefore Buddha preached in the vulgar tongue, and drew to himself those who were despised by the philosophers as ordinary men and women. Therefore were those great words uttered: "The stone which the builders rejected became the head of the corner": "For God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and things that are nought to confound the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." "The first shall be last, and the last first."

What Rousseau did for the people of Europe in the eighteenth century, Marx and others did for them in the nineteenth. His insight reveals his moral grandeur, for he was a very learned man, born and bred up among the rich; he might have despised the brutish stupid labourers and fancied that reform would come from above, from the cultured and intelligent classes, who could understand history and philosophy. But he was a moral giant, and saw that the common men always understand love, equality and heroism much better than the sophisticated ease-loving educated classes. Social and political progress is born of love and devotion, not of pedantry and oratory. Marx first inspired the downtrodden and despised labourers with a great hope and a mighty purpose. Thus was real modern Social Democracy born. Thus "was the gospel preached unto the poor."

In criticising Marx's views and actions, we must bear in mind Dr. Johnson's tribute to Goldsmith: *Let not his faults be remembered.* He was a very great man. "Marx's name will be cherished

by generations yet unborn. And his wife and children will share his glory. When poverty and slavery are no more, and the last shreds of private capitalism are consigned to the scrapheap of the past, humanity will remember that they who brought it out of the wilderness were often faint from lack of food. Mothers will tell the story of that mother, who offered her children on the altar of the cause, so that little children should play and laugh in the golden age to come. Some one must suffer that the world may be helped." Reader, will you be that one?



# SWADESHABHIMANI RAMAKRISHNA PILLAI

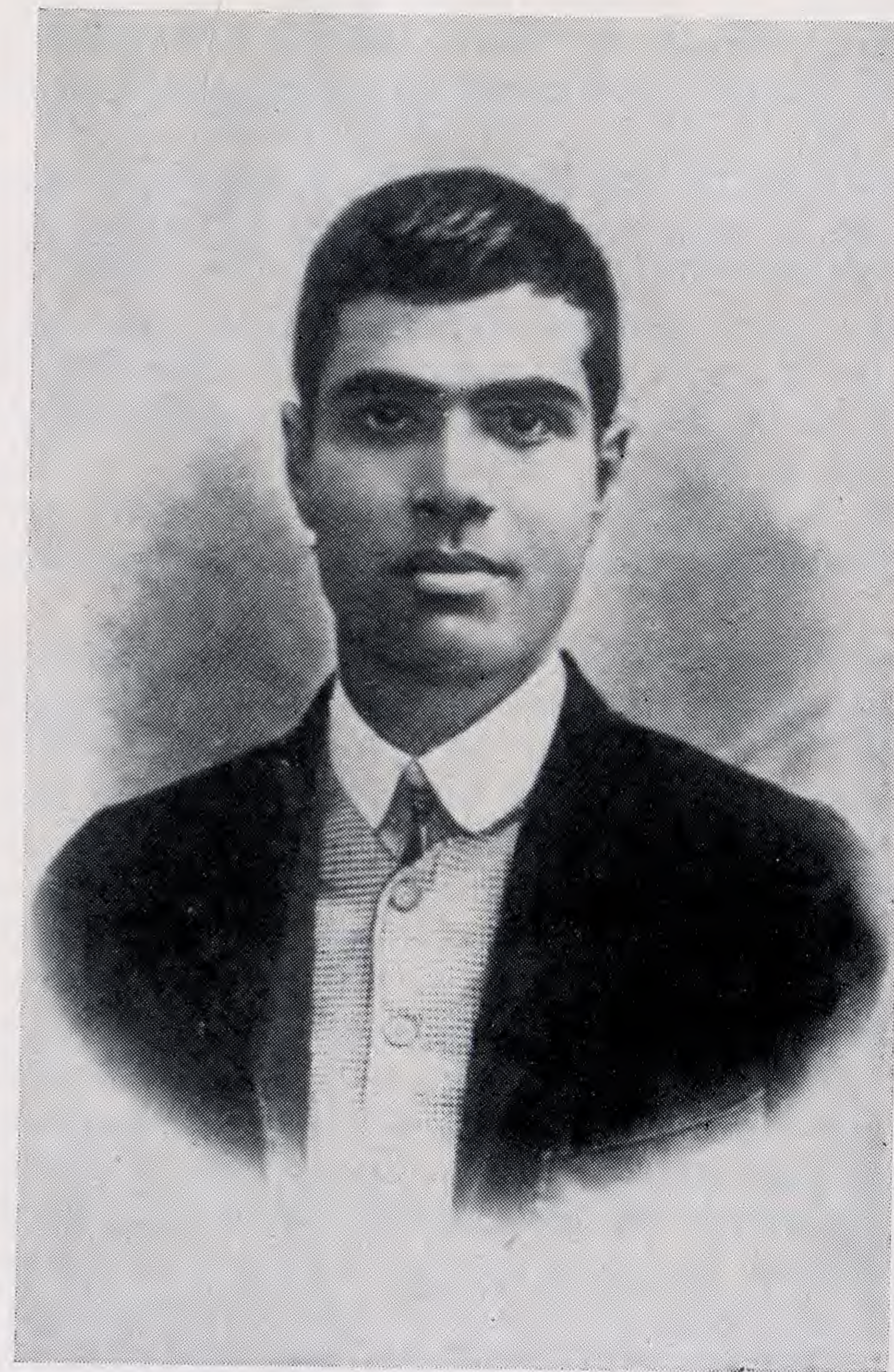
## His Life and Work

(K. Damodaran)

### I

K. Ramakrishna Pillai was born at Neyyattinkara in Travancore, now a part of Kerala State, on May 25, 1878. The importance of Pillai's contribution during the short span of his life—he died in 1916 at the age of 38—cannot be understood without a brief review of the historical, social and economic conditions in which he lived and worked.

The kingdom of Travancore, lying in the southernmost part of India, had already fallen under the suzerainty of the British Government as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century after the historic battle of Kilikollur in which the people's army, led by the famous freedom-fighter, Velu Thampi Dalava, was finally defeated by the British forces. King Marthandavarma's treaty with the East India Company for the protection of his kingdom from external and internal enemies became a weapon in the hands of the British, who consolidated their own power step by step. The Maharaja of Travancore undertook to serve the British faithfully and to pay an annual sum of Rs. 8 lakhs to the British Government for their benevolent protection of the throne from internal disturbances. The British rulers, on their part, upheld the rule of the Maharaja and permitted him to use a substantial part of the state's wealth for his pomp and luxury and other extravagant expenses of his huge palace. He was allowed to administer the state under the direction of the British Resident and was assisted by a Dewan appointed by him in consultation with the British authorities. Real control, however, was vested in the Imperial Government.



'Swadeshabhimani' Ramakrishna Pillai



The Maharaja was closely allied with the landed aristocracy. Brahmins dominated the society not only economically, but ideologically and spiritually. They were provided with free food and lodging at government cost, a service initiated by Marthandavarma's Brahmin officer popularly known as Ramayyan Dalava. Only Brahmins were appointed as teachers and advisers of the Maharaja. They helped to inspire a sense of loyalty in the minds of the people by propagating the myth that the Maharaja was of divine origin and that he ruled the country on behalf of the Lord Sree Padmanabha. All important offices were monopolised by the Brahmins and other higher castes. Scholars and writers adapted themselves to the demands of the palace. They competed with one another for petty favours of the king. The masses of the people belonging to the lower castes laboured for the benefit of the upper classes. They were untouchables and unapproachables, devoid of all civil rights and opportunities of education and government jobs.

These conditions, however, did not last permanently. Travancore became affected by the vast changes that were taking place in India and abroad, already noted in the introduction to this volume. Changes were taking place within the State itself. The establishment of factories in Alleppey and other centres, plantation of tea and rubber by the British capitalists, the Jenmi-kutiyan Proclamation of 1866-67 conferring fixity of tenure to the tenants of private lands, development of land and water transport, linking of the important town of Quilon with Madras via Tinnevely by rail in 1904, expansion of trade and commerce, the organisation of a network of schools for modern English education, and the establishment of the College of Arts at Trivandrum in 1869 leading to the inflow of progressive European ideas, the inauguration of the Legislative Council in 1888 and the Sreemulam Assembly in 1904—all these accelerated the process of modernisation of the state and capitalist penetration into the old feudal society.

As in other parts of the country, in Travancore there appeared by the end of the nineteenth century an elite of a landlord-rich-peasant origin—writers and critics, lawyers and government employees. Their democratic aspirations were often tinged with loyalty to the king and the British Government. Many nourished aristocratic dreams of improving the lot of the people by relying on the mercy of the Maharaja and the justice of the British rulers.



There were, of course, opportunist self-seekers and careerists among them who were always eager to support the government and shower praises on the Maharaja and his officers for petty personal gains. But many were inspired by the ideals of freedom and democracy and aspired for a change in the existing state of affairs. The more moderate among them abstained from political and social criticism and expressed their democratic aspirations through modern literature and art, and produced plays, lyrics, short stories, novels, and paintings reflecting the spirit of the new age. K. Ramakrishna Pillai was the most radical and the most brilliant exponent of democratic thought of this period, a vigorous champion of the downtrodden masses, a merciless critic of all those obsolete ideas, customs and institutions which stood in the way of progress. No other writer of the first and second decades of the present century contributed so ardently to social and political changes in Kerala and exerted such a powerful influence on the people.

## II

Ramakrishna Pillai was born of poor parents. His father was a Brahmin priest in a small temple where his mother was employed for sweeping and cleaning. The generous support of his maternal uncle, an advocate in Neyyattinkara, helped him complete his primary and secondary education and then he went to Trivandrum for higher studies. This generosity, however, did not last long. At Trivandrum Ramakrishna Pillai's ideas and outlook underwent a radical change. His thinking began to be dominated by a deep hatred of injustice, of oppression and exploitation, and an intense desire to serve the people. After flirting with literature for a short period, writing poems and essays, he turned to journalism and, while still an undergraduate became the editor of a journal called the *Kerala Darpanam*. His uncle, who wanted to see him as an officer in the Maharaja's Government, advised him to give up journalism and concentrate on his studies. Ramakrishna Pillai loved and respected his uncle, but he was not prepared to abandon his journalistic activities. He, therefore, had to leave his uncle and family. From then on Pillai was on his own.

In the first issue of the *Kerala Darpanam* (September 14, 1899), Ramakrishna Pillai declared that his aim was to serve the people

irrespective of caste and creed, and that to use the columns of the paper to incite caste hatred and religious rivalries was unworthy of an editor. His political ideas were still immature, and he devoted a considerable part of his spare time to reading and self-education. His journal dealt mainly with literary and social problems, with politics assuming only secondary importance. When financial mismanagement by the proprietor led to the closure of the journal, he accepted the editorship of another journal called the *Kerala Panchika*, the first issue of which was published on April 22, 1901. By this time, he had become more critical of the governmental policies and, within two years, differences arose between the editor and the proprietor who insisted on the use of a milder language in dealing with the misdeeds of government officials. The disagreement led to his resignation in February 1903.

Ramakrishna Pillai continued his activities as a freelance journalist and became a regular contributor to the weekly, *Malayali*. His writings became so popular that within a short time he was appointed editor of the paper. His political comments, especially his merciless exposure of certain corrupt officials connected with the palace, reflected the mood of the people and helped to increase the circulation of the paper. But the bureaucrats, enraged by his writings, exerted pressure on the proprietor who became more and more embarrassed and eventually asked for Pillai's resignation. Ramakrishna Pillai quit and started his own independent journal, the *Keralan*, in 1905.

Since *Keralan* was published only monthly, the paper proved inadequate to meet the requirements of the new situation. It was at this time that Abdul Khaddar Sahib, popularly known as Vakkam Moulvi, requested Ramakrishna Pillai to take charge of his paper, *Swadeshabhimani*. Moulvi Sahib was so much attracted by Ramakrishna Pillai's radical views that he left his press and other equipment at his disposal, gave him full freedom to edit and publish his paper, and encouraged him to go forward with his patriotic venture. The *Swadeshabhimani* began to be published as a weekly in January 1906. After some time, it became a bi-weekly, then a tri-weekly and finally a daily. The *Keralan* appeared alongside as a monthly.

It was a turbulent and exciting period, pregnant with revolutionary potential. The events of 1905 opened up a new era in the struggle for Indian independence and marked a turning point in



Ramakrishna Pillai's life. The Russian Revolution of 1905, the anti-imperialist upsurge in the colonial world, the partition of Bengal, the rise of the extremists in the Indian National Congress, the adoption of the resolution on *Swaraj* at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906, the split at the Surat Congress in 1907 between the moderates who wanted to achieve their goal "strictly by constitutional means by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration" and the extremists who subscribed to the programme of boycott, *swadeshi* and mass struggle as a means to achieve self-government, the participation, for the first time, of the masses in the struggle for freedom, strikes by industrial and railway workers, agrarian struggles in the Punjab, the ruthless repressive measures resorted to by the British rulers, the Seditious Meetings Act of 1907, arrests and deportations of extremist leaders—all these left an indelible mark on his thinking. Pillai's outlook widened and his criticism of the existing undemocratic and repressive state of affairs became sharper and more scientific. He became a staunch champion of freedom, democracy and social progress.

### III

With both the *Keralan* and the *Swadeshabhimani* at his command, Ramakrishna Pillai wielded a powerful pen to rouse the people to a new awareness, to inspire them with new ideals to fight their oppressors. He used his columns to inform the public about what was happening in the different countries of the world, about the struggles for freedom and democracy in Russia, Austria and China, about the conditions in France, England and Germany, and about the conflicts between the peoples and their governments. According to him, revolts in those countries were the inevitable result of the callousness of the ruling classes, and he expressed the opinion that the ruling princes in India had a lesson to learn from the fate of the kings in European countries. He became a passionate advocate of the struggle for *Swaraj* gathering momentum in India and declared: "I pity those who argue that the people of this country are not interested in self-rule".<sup>1</sup>

Analysing the nature of political agitations in British India, he wrote on May 15, 1907:

"The division of Bengal by Lord Curzon was the cause of the disturbances in Bengal. It led to protest demonstrations, *swadeshi*,

and boycott of British goods. The agitation spread to other provinces also. The situation was worsened by the tactless repressive measures of the British officers. But repression helped only to intensify the agitation. Students are in the forefront of the struggle. In the Punjab the government has launched many cases against the agitators. People resorted to riots and violent activities. But such repressive measures will fail. It is like pouring oil in fire. People's anger has been roused. It is difficult to predict what form the agitations and discontent in India will take."<sup>2</sup>

In his editorial notes in the *Keralan* he condemned the repressive policy of the government in Bengal and the Punjab, and the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai. He wrote:

"It is doubtful whether the Indian political agitation which may be compared with an elephant running amuck can be suppressed by tying it with the chain of ban on public meetings or by piercing it with weapons like deportation or by shooting the people."<sup>3</sup>

Ridiculing the statement of the Secretary of State, Mr. John Morley, that the disturbances in the Punjab were the inevitable result of Lala Lajpat Rai's seditious propaganda, Ramakrishna Pillai pointed out that even the moderate Gokhale, in an article in the *Times of India*, had expressed the view that the unrest was caused not by Lajpat Rai but by the government's repressive policies and the exploitation of the peasants.<sup>4</sup>

When Tilak's appeal for bail was dismissed by the Bombay High Court, he quoted legal opinion to show that until one was proved to have committed a crime, one had the right to be free: "Sedition is a word interpreted differently by different people and the petty police officials had their own interpretation. It is a pity that the bail was refused."<sup>5</sup>

The *Swadeshabhimani* reported that the sentence on Tilak was followed by *hartal* in Calcutta and other places. In Bombay people rioted and attacked the Europeans. The military was called into action, and in the firing that followed ten or twelve persons died and about fifty were seriously injured.

In an editorial dated July 25, 1908, Ramakrishna Pillai congratulated Tilak for his bold statement in the Court and observed that the judgement of the High Court to deport Tilak for six years was too cruel.<sup>6</sup> Criticising the government ban on public meetings and their attempt to introduce a Press Bill to suppress the freedom of the press, he wrote that the government were sadly



mistaken if they thought that such repressive measures would put a stop to all public agitations! "It will only show that they do not know human nature. The repressive measures of the government will only intensify the agitation. People's discontent will come to an end only when its cause is discovered and eliminated."<sup>7</sup>

The *Swadeshabhimani* quoted extensively from the speech of Keir Hardie on the poverty and growing discontent in India, and supported the view that the only way out of the situation was to grant India self-government as in the case of the dominions.<sup>8</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai understood that the repressive measures of the British rulers were closely connected with their exploitation of the people and resources of the country. He noticed that even in Travancore, the expansion of British capital was becoming more and more injurious to the interests of the people. He pointed out that the unjustifiable facilities given to the British planters, the reduction of the export duty on fibre, and the enhancement of duty on copra, were an indication of the Dewan's surrender to the interests of the foreign trader and the foreign planter. He took the Dewan to task for preposterously falling in with the wishes of the planters in the matter of opening up roads and communications, and said:

"We believe it is the height of folly to allow the hill ranges to be denuded of forests and to get new forests reared on the plains. We desire to have it understood that it is detrimental to the interests of the country."<sup>9</sup>

#### IV

Most of the editors in Travancore in those days were unable to understand the meaning of the changes taking place in India and abroad, and only sang praises to the divinity of the Maharaja and the greatness of the British Emperor. Ramakrishna Pillai was markedly different from them.

Criticising the widespread popular belief in the divinity and sovereignty of the Maharaja, he pointed out that the suzerainty of the kingdom had long ago passed on to the British government and that the Maharaja was responsible to them for the governance of his kingdom. Explaining how the Maharaja had lost the independence his predecessors enjoyed a century earlier and became a vassal of the British Raj, he wrote in 1905:

"... The political alliance which the same Maharaja Marthandavarma formed with the East India Company is the basis of the treaty which now exists between Travancore and the British Government. This alliance which Marthandavarma formed with the East India Company was not of a subsidiary nature as it eventually developed into. It was meant to safeguard Travancore against external enemies and to foster internal and external commerce. Tippu's demolition of North Travancore and the maladministration of the country by Balaramavarma and his favourites are the steps by which the East India Company ascended to the suzerainty of our land. The treaty of subsidiary alliance existing between Travancore and the British Government was made with the weakest of the rulers of our country."<sup>10</sup>

There were people who believed that the status of the Maharaja of Travancore was something similar to that of the King of England. But this was an illusion, for "in England people have the right to control the king. The struggle between the king and the people ended in the victory of the people. In Travancore, on the other hand, the king lost his independence. He rules the state under the sovereignty of the British Government. The British Government has the right even to depose him. The king's authority is not determined by the wishes of the people. It is controlled and checked by the representatives of the British."<sup>11</sup> Ramakrishna Pillai believed that only the people were sovereign, and that the king derived his power from the people who were the final authority:

"Government, without the consent of the people, might have been effective when they were in their infant stage. But, in due course of time, they will certainly attain the stage of those in the Russian empire. People's consent is necessary for the government. The king's authority, in the final analysis, derives from the consent of the people. They may entrust that right or a part of that right to one individual or many. ... This means that the people have the right to withdraw the king's authority. This is quite clear. The history of Mexico, Norway and Serbia proves it. It has also happened that when the king's policy is not in accordance with the will of the people, he is dethroned. Even in England people have, on more than one occasion, transferred the authority of the king to others. Therefore, the government of the people belongs to the people themselves and they are entitled to use that right in accordance



with their on wishes.”

Ramakrishna Pillai consistently upheld the interests of the people and their struggle for freedom and independence. In an article in the *Keralan* published as early as 1905, he declared that “under the influence of European civilisation and the notions of equality, fraternity and liberty which it inculcates”, it was impossible to preserve the old traditions and ideals for any considerable length of time. “We have fervent hopes that the present struggle for supremacy, or rather for equality, will end in wiping away the ugly and untoward distinction between man and man in restoring the natural rights of a subject to their due recognition by the state irrespective of caste or creed.”<sup>12</sup>

In the absence of an all-Travancore national organization to draw the largest number of people into political activity, Ramakrishna Pillai's criticism of the government took the form of appeals to the Maharaja to put a stop to the bureaucratic excesses of the Dewan and other officials. When such appeals fell on deaf ears, the more enlightened among the people began to be convinced that the Maharaja—whatever his qualities and accomplishments as a person—was a puppet in the hands of forces beyond his control.

According to Ramakrishna Pillai, people were devoid of political power not because they were inherently incapable of ruling themselves, nor because the objective conditions were not yet ripe. The real obstacles were mainly three-fold. First, the vast majority of the people were illiterate and not acquainted with modern ideas of freedom and democracy. Secondly, they were divided among themselves into non-Malayali Brahmins, Malayali Brahmins, Nairs, Christians, Ezhavas, Muslims, Channars, Pulayans and Parayans. Until all of them had attained status of equality, this division would not end. But the Government's policy was to maintain this division.<sup>13</sup> Communal and caste organizations of non-Malayali Brahmins, Pottis, Nairs, Namboodiris, Ezhavas, Barbers and so on had sprung up in Travancore, voicing separatist demands, each caste organisation publishing its own journal. These papers represented to the government the grievances of the respective castes. Such activities were certainly praiseworthy. But they sometimes sacrificed truth and justice for casteism and gave rise to communal and caste rivalries. And these rivalries and dissensions were often exploited and aggravated by the rulers in their own interests.

The third and most important obstacle was the absence of a strong united political organisation of the common people free from any sectarian bias. Such an association alone could fight for common demands. Ramakrishna Pillai stressed the necessity of an all-Travancore organisation of citizens for the amelioration of the social and political conditions of the people irrespective of caste and creed; only such an independent organisation of the people could prevent the autocratic acts of the government officials. Government derive a conscience and self-awareness only from their fear of the people.<sup>14</sup> It was, therefore, the duty of all those who called themselves patriots to see that caste distinctions were not recognised in the political and administrative affairs of the state.<sup>15</sup>

In practice, this meant an end to the domination of any particular community in the political and cultural affairs of the country, equality for all citizens, and special facilities for the downtrodden people to develop their material and cultural life. In an editorial dated May 2, 1906, Ramakrishna Pillai pointed out that Trivandrum was still dominated by Brahmins and that even the spread of modern education had not curtailed their power. They maintained many customs based on superstition. They propagated mythical stories about the divinity of the kings who were not supposed to go near anybody who was not a Brahmin, who should be served only by Brahmins, and whose children should be educated only by Brahmins.<sup>16</sup>

The Brahmin officials and their supporters argued that as Travancore had been dedicated to the Hindu god, Sree Padmanabha, non-Hindus could not have any right in the administration of the kingdom. This was considered justification enough for the exclusion of not only Christians and Muslims but also low-caste Hindus from government services in the State. Exposing the absurdity of such arguments, Ramakrishna Pillai wrote:

“Are the Christians and the Muslims not the people of Travancore? Does the state belong only to a handful of immoral and irresponsible Brahmins? Unless this question is answered, the Christians, Muslims and the non-Brahmins of this kingdom will not have any future.”

Ramakrishna Pillai asserted that Travancore was not a theocratic state. It belonged not only to the Brahmins, but to all the Hindus, Muslims and Christians and others who inhabited it. They were the people who laboured and enhanced the wealth and prosperity



of the state. But alas ! The fruits of their labour were exploited for the benefit of a small section of the Hindus on the pretext that the kingdom had been dedicated to a Hindu god called Sree Padmanabha! The kingdom, in fact, belonged not to the god but to the people. It was ruled not by Sree Padmanabha, but by the Maharaja and his officials under the guidance and supervision of the British Government. It is true that King Marthandavarma, "deeply conscious of the sins which human slaughter, either under the pretext of war, or by suppression of internal treason and treachery, necessarily imposed on those that undertook it", had dedicated his kingdom to Lord Sree Padmanabha under the instigation of his Brahmin advisers. But it was a clever device to sway the minds of the masses, to win the support of religious-minded people and thus to consolidate the power of the ruling class; for "the act of dedication admirably succeeded in quelling internal disturbances and restoring order and peace throughout the kingdom and in reconciling the Maharaja and his family with his internal foes."<sup>17</sup> But how could this be used as a pretext to maintain the supremacy of the Brahmins in the 20th century when modern ideas of freedom and democracy were spreading among the people? Ramakrishna Pillai exhorted Christians, Muslims and non-Brahmin Hindus to unite and fight for their just political rights. He expressed the hope that the Maharaja would be happy when the people became bold enough to raise their demands and to fight for them.

## V

According to Ramakrishna Pillai, one of the main causes of the poverty and destitution of the people of Travancore was the misuse of a substantial part of the agricultural surplus for conspicuous unproductive consumption, for the upkeep of palace officials and *choultries* for the free service of food and shelter to Brahmins, most of whom led the lives of parasites, idling away their time. He suggested that those Brahmins who lived on the labour of others be compelled to engage themselves in some productive activity. At the same time the burden of taxes on the people should be reduced, and the workers be enabled to get more wages. Such measures would increase the prosperity of the people as a whole.<sup>18</sup> He whole-heartedly supported the demand made in the Sreemulam

Assembly to do away with the free feeding of Brahmins at government cost and to utilise the funds for the expansion of railways. This demand was, however, cynically turned down by Dewan Rajagopalachari.

A similar situation existed in the field of education. The *Swadeshabhimani* reported that out of 445 Hindus who passed the B.A. examination in 1908, 363 were Brahmins and only 82 were non-Brahmins. A vast majority of the 82 non-Brahmins belonged to higher castes like Nairs. The lower castes in the categories of untouchables and unapproachables—the Ezhavas, Pulayans, Parayans—were given little opportunity to educate themselves. Consistent demands were made in the Assembly to change this policy and impart at least primary education free to all classes. Commenting on these demands, Ramakrishna Pillai wrote:

"It is now almost admitted by all wise administrators that primary education should be made free if not compulsory. We... trust that the Government will not find it difficult to carry out the proposal to impart primary education free to all classes of people."<sup>19</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai realised that the educational policy of the state was to maintain the class divisions in society and to prevent at all cost the growth of anti-imperialist and democratic ideas among the people. The authorities feared that imparting higher education to the poorer sections of the people would be incurring a risk, which must be avoided. The new educational code initiated by the government in 1910 sought to perpetuate the division of society into the rich and the poor by imparting only elementary education to the poor and secondary education to the rich who were capable of supporting themselves. "This policy is quite wrong", the *Swadeshabhimani* pointed out, "The people could be divided not into the rich and the poor, but into the more intelligent and the less intelligent. Intelligence and talents are not reserved by nature for the rich. They are, on the other hand, more commonly found among the poor. A state like Travancore ought to see that its best children, irrespective of their being rich or poor, are offered all the opportunities for the growth and development of their intelligence."<sup>20</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai thought that primary education in the state would not improve as long as the teachers were poorly paid and dissatisfied. He used the columns of his paper to plead for the cause of the teachers. Primary school teachers in those days were paid a



paltry Rs. 5 per month. It was after much pressure that the government decided to increase their salary to Rs. 7. The *Swadeshabhimani* wrote that it was a shame that the salary of a teacher was not comparable even to that of a peon, and pleaded that it should immediately be raised to at least Rs. 10.

Ramakrishna Pillai was one of the first thinkers in Kerala who tried to discern and analyse the contradictions inherent in the development of industries, trade and commerce within the hierarchical caste system and the complicated intermingling of caste and class. He showed an extraordinary ability to grasp what was decisively new about the developing capitalist form of production and to comprehend the essence of the new situation revealed by the blending of caste rivalries and class conflicts. On the one hand, he supported the downtrodden, untouchable castes in their demand for equality of status in the political, socio-economic and educational spheres; on the other, he upheld the struggles of the working people against their employers who exploited them.

"Where did the income of the state come from?" he asked. And he himself answered: "It came from the workers, peasants, artisans and traders who worked to increase the wealth of the country... Have the Pulayans who work on the fields increased their own income? The Channars and potters and such other artisans also work to increase the wealth of the state. Have their material conditions improved? Not at all. The rich in the urban areas build bungalows and indulge in luxury, because they exploit the workers and pay to them only a small fraction of the fruits of their labour. The products of those who work reach the galleries of the rich, or they are spent for providing free food (for the Brahmins) on behalf of the government. With the development of modern ideas of civilizations, the conflict between the labourer and his employer concerning their respective shares is becoming intensified. Complaints that the workers do not get their due share of the products of their labour have begun to be heard in this country also. The policy of the government in not granting facilities and rights to the workers and in giving away the fruits of their labour to those who do not work will create dissatisfaction among the people and complaints against the injustice of the government."<sup>21</sup>

At the same time he pointed out that it was necessary to have a national organisation to fight for the common political and economic demands of the people.

## VI

By this time Ramakrishna Pillai had become acquainted with the modern ideas of socialism, and he appealed to the workers to study "the doctrines of Socialists who demand equality of opportunity." He became more and more ruthless in his criticism of the anti-people policies of the government. He wrote repeatedly in sharp and forceful language about the demands of the people, about the corruption and favouritism rampant among the highest officials, about the Dewan's cowardly, selfish and immoral activities, about the Maharaja's extravagances, about the squandering of the state's wealth in conspicuous unproductive consumption. He was not satisfied with exposing corruption and nepotism among high officials in general terms, but concretely, even as Marx had suggested:

"It is the duty of the Press to step forward on behalf of the oppressed and their struggles. And, then gentlemen, the edifice of slavery has its most effective supports in the subordinate political and social functionaries that immediately deal with private life—the person, the living individual. It is not sufficient to fight the general conditions and the supporter powers. The press must make up its mind to oppose *this* constable, *this* attorney, *this* counsellor."

Ramakrishna Pillai's main target of attack was Mr. Rajagopalachari, the Dewan of Travancore. He was sharp in his criticism of the "bureaucratic spirit with which the Dewan was apparently inculcated by the British government in India."<sup>22</sup> He warned that the Dewan's financial policies were leading the State to a crisis. "Systematic swindling has been practised as a fine art under his wonderful personal supervision! The financial muddle in Travancore is coming to a crisis. A penetration into the mysteries of that branch of the administration will bring to light revelation more astonishing than have been hitherto found as such." The *lucrative jobs* were filled by non-Malayali Brahmins "who prosper on the fat of the land and whose sole object is the filling of their nests at any cost and investing their easily earned wealth in distant *Punjas* and *Nanjas* in Tanjaur, Trichinopoly, Kumbhakonam or Mayavaram, Madras or Ganjam."<sup>23</sup> Ramakrishna Pillai pointed out that such activities of the Dewan would bring the State and the Maharaja into disrepute.



In an editorial on June 5, 1907 he remarked that corruption and bribery had become rampant under Dewan Rajagopalachari. "Taxation and other revenue of the government have increased. But a substantial part of this income goes into the pockets of the supporters of the king. The *Foustari* Commissioner, Anantarama Iyer had earned more than Rs. 30 lakhs in a short time. Sankaran Thampi also earned not less than Rs. 30 lakhs. Besides, their wives and relatives have, through bribery and other illegal means, earned considerable wealth. It is clear that those are not savings from their salaries. They have resorted to illegal and corrupt means. At the same time, the poor have only become poorer. The supporters of the king enriched themselves at the cost of the people."<sup>24</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai did not spare even the Maharaja for his insane luxuries and extravagant expenses. The Maharaja spent more than a lakh of rupees for the useless and superstitious *Thalikkettu* ceremony of his daughter in *Vadasseril Ammaveedu*. "Our sense of justice compels us to state that by such luxurious spendings, the rulers make the people lose their loyalty to the Maharaja."<sup>25</sup>

Again: "The palace appropriates a substantial part of the government treasury for itself. The amount is not used for justifiable expenses, but for pomp and luxury, for tours and feasts. A few sychophants and favourites of the Dewan, in addition to their normal salaries amass considerable wealth . . . while the people are not benefited in any way."<sup>26</sup>

It is true that he did not openly advocate the abolition of the monarchy or the overthrow of the British imperialist rule in India and concentrated on immediately realizable reforms in the economy, social structure and administration. But even such limited demands met with tenacious resistance at the hands of the traditionally privileged strata of the State who could understand the revolutionary implications of his ideas.

Ramakrishna Pillai's inspiring writings made him more and more popular among the people. His rising popularity may be explained by an interesting incident in his life. Despite the restricted franchise (only property-owners and graduates had the right to vote) he was unanimously elected to the Sreemulam Assembly as a representative of Neyyattinkara Taluk. As a member, he sent two resolutions for discussion in the Assembly. The first resolution asked the government to stop the unrestricted facilities offered to foreign

planters to acquire land against the interests of the people. The second related to the bribery and corruption of high palace officials. The infuriated Dewan was in a dilemma. He was afraid to face the discussion of such resolutions in the Assembly. He resorted to a vile trick to save his skin. He declared that the election of Ramakrishna Pillai was invalid because he was not a permanent resident of Neyyattinkara! This created a stir in the country. Voters held mass meetings to protest against the action of the Dewan. But the Dewan was adamant. He ordered a re-election in the constituency to replace Ramakrishna Pillai. But nobody came forward to contest. The Dewan then nominated one Kesava Pillai as the representative from Neyyattinkara. The nominated member, however, refused to accept the honour and never attended any meeting of the Assembly. The seat of Ramakrishna Pillai remained vacant!

Ramakrishna Pillai interpreted this incident not as personal humiliation but as a cowardly attack on the democratic aspirations of the people and as a green signal to the bribery and corruption of the court officials. He warned that the stifling of a discussion on corruption would not solve the problem, but would only intensify the people's anger.

## VII

The editorials and articles in the *Keralan* and the *Swadeshabhimani* created a new awakening among the public who became more and more conscious of their rights and increasingly critical of the government. The Dewan and his government on their part, instead of satisfying the just demands of the people, resorted to police methods of repression. "The nervousness displayed by the British officials in India," Ramakrishna Pillai wrote, "in the face of the growing spirit of public opinion and popular freedom has unfortunately been copied by the local authorities and it has taken a firm root in the soil. The natural consequence is mutual distrust of the people and the State and consequent secret prying into the mysteries of each other's concerns. The police are thus much in evidence; and as in British India, we are definitely under the rule of the police and we know not where it will end."<sup>27</sup>

Police excesses created a stifling atmosphere in the state. People were forced to be silent. But silence did not mean consent. When repression became intolerable, they did not hesitate to



strike back. The Chalai Riot in 1908 is an instance. Petty merchants oppressed by the police made repeated appeals to the government to redress their grievances. When they did not receive even a reply, a huge procession marched to the palace as a protest against police repression. The provocative interference of the police at Chalai infuriated the masses who threw stones at the police and set fire to the police station. The riot was finally suppressed by the military and a number of people were arrested. Most of the newspapers were too terrified to intervene. Ramakrishna Pillai, on the contrary, upheld the cause of the people and criticised police excesses and the repressive policy of the government. "Nowhere, in the history of the police oppression," he wrote, "have there been committed greater excesses than here in Travancore. The incident connected with the recent riot case are a standing testimony to this truth. They are not less painful than those that are said to have taken place in other parts of India during these troublesome times."<sup>28</sup>

After three months, he wrote again: "The Chalai riot has not been without a moral significance. If the riot has been a sure index of the growing unpopularity of the police and their methods, the inefficiency of the magistracy to cope with the situation and the tactlessness of the higher authorities in command, the indiscriminate arrests that followed the riots, the abnormal delay in bringing the accused to trial and the cruel victimisation of the people betoken the vindictive spirit of the bureaucracy which has taken hold of the powers that be."<sup>29</sup> Ramakrishna Pillai appealed to the Maharaja to use his influence "to cry a halt to those unworthy deeds," and "to bring the matters to a just pass." Challenging the prejudiced and one-sided Assembly report of the Dewan on the disturbances in Chalai, he observed:

"It was, we think, very unstatesmanlike on the part of the Dewan to have characterised it as a serious riot and to have given his own version as to how it began, and what consequences followed it. We are sure that under other circumstances these remarks of the Dewan will be taken to amount to a contempt of court; and where the state itself is the complainant, such a behaviour was thoroughly unwarranted. We trust, however, that the worthy judge who presides over the Chalai Riot case will not be influenced by any versions of the incidents given under the above circumstances."<sup>30</sup>

As Ramakrishna Pillai pointed out, "it was not so much the riot itself that arrested public attention in South India as the sensational development that followed that much magnified disturbance."<sup>31</sup> Sixty-two persons were sentenced by the Sessions Court. But the High Court released them all and recommended the prosecution of the police officials who were involved in shooting the people and giving false evidence in the court and also the dismissal of the Sessions Judge who had abused his powers. The highest authorities in the state, however, manoeuvred in such a way that these recommendations of the Judge were ignored and the culprits saved. Ramakrishna Pillai commented sarcastically: "The Police are, in the opinion of our paternal government, all composed of saints who are the very incarnation of truth and justice. We are pained to reflect that both the judiciary and the executive should have come to such a predicament and we will only wish for a better state of affairs."<sup>32</sup>

### VIII

The Dewan and his government were at their wits' end. Afraid and at the same time enraged by criticism, they wanted to silence the voice of truth by the enactment of a Press Law to suppress the freedom of the press. Ramakrishna Pillai was quick to sense the danger. Criticising the proposal, he wrote: "What is required today in Travancore is not the suppression of the freedom of the press, but an administration which will eliminate corruption, and which will see that all the constituents of the government have the virtues of truth and justice."<sup>33</sup>

Even so, inspired articles and views began to appear in the columns of the loyal press about the necessity of a new law to improve the conditions in the profession of journalism. The editor of the *Western Star*, a supporter of the Dewan, went to the extent of saying that the press had to be controlled by the government in order to put a stop to "the irresponsibility of offending organs." "Some stroke of insanity", Ramakrishna Pillai retorted, "is seen to pervade the statements of our old and 'respectable' contemporary, the *Western Star*, that it is time in Travancore for the government to control the press more strictly. . . Any journalist has to call upon the *Western Star* to rake its brain and understand, without fail, that criticising and exposing the vagaries of Sircar servants does



not amount to evil of any kind, but unavoidably leads towards an honest doing of civic and journalistic duties, and that putting down favouritism and throwing off altogether the yoke of favourites even when they might happen to be royal minions goes towards advancing righteousness. . . Let it be distinctly understood that there are, in Travancore, at least among the ryot and peasant population, people numerically stronger and morally better than the followers of the 'unoffending' *Western Star*."<sup>34</sup>

Ignoring such criticisms, the editor of the *Western Star* proposed "to hold a conference of the editors of all the newspapers and periodicals in Travancore to consider the present conditions and the outlook of journalism in the state." Ramakrishna Pillai was intelligent enough to discern the "secret springs of action underneath the invitation issued." He made it clear that he was not opposed to a conference of editors and even to the formation of a Travancore Press Association "which could do a number of things to improve the journals in all ways."<sup>35</sup> But he expressed his vehement opposition to the enactment of any law to suppress the freedom of expression. He wrote:

"It is, of course, very long since, in the whole of India, there began a sort of persecution by certain sections of the bureaucracy, the only papers which have suffered being those which have been thought by the authorities to be connected with treason. By way of suppressing what has been believed, by the Sircar servants, a bad tendency on the part of the journalists, a tendency both to pass wholesale condemnation of the government as a body, and to attribute malafide motives to government as such, the officers of the Sircar, have been seen to resort to means perhaps far from desirable." But the case of Travancore was different. No paper indulged in treason. Nobody deviated from loyalty. "Not even one single word of any the least repulsive kind of annotation either on the sovereign's personality or on his government as a corporation, has ever appeared in any of the newspapers in Travancore, not even in the course of strongly impeaching the highly impeachable acts, both of public servants as well as of the favourites of His Highness the Maharaja."<sup>36</sup>

The conference of the newspaper editors was finally held. Most of the editors were not in favour of the enactment of any new law to suppress the freedom of the press in general, although they did not object to the suppression of papers like the *Swadeshabhimani*.

The Dewan was shrewd enough to understand that criminal proceedings against the *Swadeshabhimani* under existing laws in a court would boomerang against himself by bringing to light many of his own misdeeds, omissions and commissions.

As a student of law, Ramakrishna Pillai had written every word of his criticism within the four walls of legality and had collected a mass of evidence to prove his accusations. Besides, he was fighting for the cause of the people in the final victory of whose struggles he had full confidence. "Conceited men like Mr. Rajagopalachari", he wrote on September 19, 1910, "tremble like grass-blades in breeze. For support they resort to laws restricting people's liberties. But the tyranny of such rulers can be overthrown by the storm of tireless popular struggles."<sup>37</sup>

## IX

Exactly after one week, on September 26, 1910, the Government, in panic and confusion, struck their final blow. Two strong police parties simultaneously surrounded the office of the *Swadeshabhimani* and the residence of the editor, confiscated his press, equipment, furniture, his rare collection of books and journals, and his valuable documents. The editor was arrested and taken to the police station.

The news spread like wild fire. The whole town was astir. There was a spontaneous mass demonstration of protest. Students were on the streets. All traffic stopped. People in their thousands surrounded the police station and cheered the smiling prisoner. They finally dispersed only when they were informed that their editor would be produced in a court of law for trial. In fact, the editor himself welcomed a trial as it would be a fine opportunity to expose the tyranny and callousness of the regime. But the government were too cowardly to face him even in their own court. Instead the Maharaja issued a Royal Proclamation which stated:

"The Proclamation to all people issued by Sree Padmanabhadasa, Vanchipala, Sir Ramavarma Kulasekhara, Kireetapathi, Manne Sultan, Maharaja Raja Rama Raja Bahadur, Shamsheerjung, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, F.M.U., M.R.A.S., Officer of the Law Instruction Public, Maharaja Avargal:



"As we are convinced that the suppression of the newspaper called the *Swadeshabhimani* published from Trivandrum and banishment from our kingdom of K. Ramakrishna Pillai, who is the Managing Proprietor and the editor of the said paper, have become necessary in the interests of public welfare, we hereby order that the said Ramakrishna Pillai be arrested and deported and that his re-entry into our kingdom be prevented until we order otherwise. We also order that all copies of the newspaper called the *Swadeshabhimani* and the press and other materials which are used to print that paper and all properties belonging to it be confiscated by our government. We also hereby order that no suit, civil or otherwise, be filed by anybody against our government or any officer of our government in this regard."

The cowardliness of the government is obvious from the fact that this strange proclamation nowhere mentioned what the crime of the editor was, how his newspaper was prejudicial to the interests of the public, or why even resort to a court of law was disallowed. This impression is strengthened by the hasty manner in which Ramakrishna Pillai was sneaked out of Travancore in the dead of night.

A reign of terror followed the arrest and deportation of Ramakrishna Pillai. Anybody who possessed copies of the *Swadeshabhimani* hid them safely or destroyed them for fear of arrest. Anyone who had been acquainted with the editor became a suspect. The people's movement for freedom and democracy in the state of Travancore suffered a temporary set back.

But outside Travancore, the Royal Proclamation, banishing Ramakrishna Pillai, evoked widespread protests. Many important personalities—writers, intellectuals, politicians and others—condemned the deportation as a grave injustice and a despicable manifestation of irresponsibility. A number of papers in the various parts of the country published editorials and articles harshly criticising the unjustifiable act of the Travancore government. The *Bengali* of Calcutta, for example, wrote that deportation without trial and without even asking for an explanation from the accused was nothing but satanic. Even the moderate *Hindu* of Madras wrote in its editorial dated September 28, 1910:

"We feel bound to say, however, that the draconian order issued in the case is one not worthy of an enlightened government. It is a clear confession of weakness and is not an indication of strength

for a government to fall back upon force where it should rely upon law for the maintenance of order among the people."

## X

With nothing to sustain him except his unquenchable thirst for freedom and justice, Ramakrishna Pillai was forcibly taken out of the frontiers of Travancore. But deportation, however, unexpected, could not break his indomitable will. No suffering could divert him from his commitment to the cause of the people. Nothing could extinguish his burning faith in his cherished ideal of freedom, democracy and social justice.

Soon after the deportation, his wife, B. Kalyani Amma, accompanied by their two children aged three and four, joined him at Tinnevely. She recalls the exciting reunion in her memoirs:

"He was waiting at the station. As he had to leave the state with nothing but the dress he was wearing, he had neither a dhoti nor a shirt for a change after his bath. He had no money to purchase new clothes. Hence he appeared in unclean dress, tired by the journey. The unshaven beard had somewhat hidden the brightness of his face. But those eyes! Ah! who could diminish the brightness of those fiery globes except the messengers of Yama? A single glance at me, those pure eyes which reflected courage, steadfastness, love and kindness, removed all my fears and doubts even as darkness is dispelled by the appearance of the sun."<sup>38</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai tried to persuade his wife to remain in Travancore with the little children in the house of his brother till he was in a position to find the material means to support them. But she was adamant. She was determined to follow her loving husband in his sorrows and sufferings.

They started a new life at a small rented house in Madras. It was here that Ramakrishna Pillai wrote a moving account of the story of his deportation and published it both in English and in Malayalam. He also wrote a book on journalism which is still one of the few good books in Malayalam on the subject. It was one of the most difficult periods in his life.

"We had only Rs. 200 in my savings bank account and Rs. 90 in cash. This was our capital," recalls Kalyani Amma. They had no regular income. "We lived on the royalties due from his books. But some of the publishers cheated him." She supplemented the



income by giving tuition to some little children. Many well-wishers and admirers, students, intellectuals, writers, and common people stretched their helping hands to them. Many invited them to live as their guests. After a few months, Ramakrishna Pillai and his family went to Malabar and visited a number of friends and admirers. At Palghat, the famous authoress, Tharavath Ammalu Amma, who was already acquainted with his writings, opened her doors to him and his family, and adopted him as her own son. The editors of some well-known journals—both English and Malayalam—approached him for his cooperation and contributions. People recognised him as a patriot, an eminent thinker, and an ardent social reformer. Wherever he went, he was given a hero's welcome. At a huge public meeting at Palghat, he was presented with a gold medal, and the title of *Swadeshabhimani* was bestowed on him. Replying to the many congratulatory speeches on the occasion, he declared that man could live as man only by fulfilling his duties to society, that he was not sorry for his sufferings, and that he would do his duty whatever the consequences.<sup>39</sup>

The unexpected banishment from the land he loved, isolation from his nearest relatives and the people for whose cause he fought relentlessly for a decade, the suppression of his newspaper and the press and the loss of all his earnings including his valuable collection of books, the news about his mother's sudden death caused by the shock of his banishment, premature death of his child, increasing debts and decreasing income, his own failing health—all these created many wounds in his heart. It was at this time that certain friends and mediators approached him with offers of official reconciliation and permission to return to Travancore if only he relented. He stoutly rejected all suggestions of apology: nothing could divert him from his chosen path—the path of struggle and sacrifice for a better social order.

His wife recalls in her memoirs: "All his earnings had been invested in the newspaper and the magazine. When they were confiscated, there was nothing left. He was allowed to take only a fountain pen which was in his pocket. He was destined to live his future life with the help of this pen."<sup>40</sup>

He used this pen to continue his literary and journalistic activities vigorously and restlessly. He wrote a few books and contributed a number of articles to different journals. It was in this period that he wrote a series of articles in the *Atmaposhini* on

Socialism. In these articles, he explained the origin and development of Socialism in various countries, the contributions of Robert Owen, Saint Simon, Fourier, Louis Blank, Proudhon and Lassalle, and tried to evaluate the effect of Socialist ideas on Western thought. This series on Socialism was, in fact, an introductory work to his biography of Karl Marx.

It is also during this period that he was attracted by the struggle in South Africa under the leadership of Gandhi and wrote about his life and struggles. It was one of the earliest biographies of Mahatma Gandhi published in this country.

His writings were often interrupted by his illness which after some time was diagnosed as tuberculosis. His wife and friends were worried and he was advised by the doctors to take complete rest. "Doctors may know my physical conditions, but not the condition of my mind", he consoled his wife: "I can't live without work. I wish to die while writing. If my right hand dies I shall write with my left hand . . . I have so much to do."<sup>41</sup>

In January 1915, Ramakrishna Pillai and his family shifted to Cannanore where Kalyani Amma accepted the job of a teacher in a girl's school. By the end of the year, his condition became worse. Even in his acute illness, he continued to write. But he could not complete his work. He died on March 28, 1916,

## XI

Ramakrishna Pillai fought, suffered, and sacrificed his all for the cause of the people. But his struggles, sufferings and sacrifices did not go in vain. The ideas he propagated for more than a decade and a half did not die with him. On the contrary, the struggle against feudalism and imperialism entered a new, higher stage. More and more people came to be influenced by the ideas of freedom, democracy and socialism.

Ramakrishna Pillai's literary and journalistic activities comprised a spate of articles, essays, editorials, book reviews, and a few books. Some of them are dated and too topical to be of relevance today. But some have astonishingly resisted the passage of time. His ideas about the sovereignty of the people, his scathing criticism of bureaucratic impudence, bribery and corruption, his series of articles on democracy and socialism, and, above all, his biography of Karl Marx are more than of contemporary historical importance



and are capable of inspiring the present generation with enthusiasm and a commitment to the cause of the people.

His biography of Karl Marx in Malayalam was published in the first week of August, 1912, about five years before the Socialist Revolution in Russia. In the same year, in March, Hardayal's article "Karl Marx: A Modern Rishi" had appeared in the *Modern Review*. But as far as we know, Ramakrishna Pillai's study was the first book on Marx published in an Indian language.

The two biographies are similar in many respects. A comparative study of the two texts compels one to imagine that both the authors must have depended on the same source material or that Ramakrishna Pillai might have relied upon the article in *Modern Review* which had appeared earlier. There is less chance of the latter possibility being true because the time-gap between the two is of a few months only. Besides Ramakrishna Pillai was a voracious reader himself and used not only the libraries but books and journals received from abroad. However, in spite of the obvious similarities, one cannot but be struck by the difference in approaches of the two authors. Hardayal glorifies Marx and his family for their sufferings for a noble cause, but dismisses Marx's basic ideas as defective, one-sided and even stupid. Such manifestations of intellectual arrogance, bordering on a total ignorance of Marx's theories, are absent in Ramakrishna Pillai's book. He explained Marx's ideas not to refute them, but to understand them, and to propagate them; for he wanted the doctrines of the Socialists "to take root among the workers of this land". His exposition of the Marxist theories of historical materialism, of class struggle and surplus value, and his concluding remarks about what he understood the nature of Communism reveals his intense desire for radical change in the socio-economic conditions of India in favour of the oppressed and exploited sections of the people.

This in no way suggests that Pillai had a thorough grasp of Marxism or that he could successfully use it as a guide to analyse Indian reality. But that is understandable, because he lived and worked at a time when most of Marx's own books were not available in India. It is quite probable that he had to depend mainly on secondary sources.

Ramakrishna Pillai explains the main theoretical concepts of Marx in isolation, not as parts of a unified totality. According to Marxism, as Lukacs observed, the whole takes precedence over the

parts and the parts, therefore, must be construed from the whole and not the whole from the parts: "Marx always sees the whole from the standpoint of an even more comprehensive totality, that of a great socio-historical process... It is this unconditional hegemony of the totality, of the unity of the whole over the abstract isolation of the parts, which constitutes the essence of Marx's social theory, the dialectical method."<sup>42</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai correctly observes that social evils like poverty, slavery and social conflicts are the results of private ownership of land and in other spheres and that there would be no private property under Communism. He also points out that "the system of sale and purchase exists only in a society that distinguishes between 'your' and 'mine'; it has no reason to exist in a society that takes it for granted, 'nothing is mine, everything belongs to the society.' Hence it becomes clear that once we do away with private property the need for money disappears." It may, however, be noted that his investigation of the nature of the Communist society is coloured by Utopian, egalitarian and anarchist elements of thought, probably because he fails to analyse the development of human society historically and dialectically. He writes, for example, that "the first requirement of achieving such a state is that people should not desire to have anything as private property. They should leave all property to the society, and along with that, give up the system of money," because "it is with the help of money that the system of capital is maintained."

Now, according to Marx, money is nothing but "the most generalised form of property". The greed for money and the accumulation of private property arose at a particular stage in the development of society when the exchange of the products of human labour became a generalised phenomenon, i.e., when trade and commerce began to expand. "When it becomes possible", Marx wrote in *Das Capital*, "to hold fast to a commodity as exchange value or to exchange value as a commodity the greed for money awakens. As the circulation of commodities extends, the power of money increases."<sup>43</sup>

Marx showed that when not only those things which were produced in excess of people's needs, but the entire product of industry found its way into the realm of commerce, "even the things which people had formerly looked upon as inalienable, became objects of exchange and bargaining, in fact could be disposed of. Even those



things which had hitherto been handed over but not exchanged, had been given but not sold, had been acquired but not bought—virtue, love, opinions, science, conscience, etc.—passed into commerce. This period is one of wholesale corruption, of universal venality, or, to write in terms of political economy, it is the period when everything, spiritual and material, has become a saleable commodity, is taken to the market for the appraisalment of its proper value.”<sup>44</sup>

Marx observed that the bourgeoisie “has left no other bond between man and man but crude self-interest and unfeeling cash payment. It has drowned pious zeal, chivalrous enthusiasm and human sentimentalism in the chill waters of selfish calculation.”<sup>45</sup> He observed that under the system of capitalist private property money becomes the only need of man and that with the increase in his need for money “man becomes ever poorer as man.”

In India the domination of money accompanied the decay and decomposition of the idyllic village economy that was shattered by the penetration of commodity production and the replacement of the old local self-sufficiency by a system of commercial intercourse. When the development of capitalism in Europe paved the way for the emergence of a world market, and India was opened up to international trade by the Portuguese, Dutch, French and British traders, money became increasingly the index of the wealth of individuals as well as of nations. It was in this period that money became the chief stimulus in the psychological life of the upper classes. Progressive writers in different languages of India expressed their concern at the growing alienation created by the new division of society and the developing commodity-money-exchange which distorted human relations and “impoverished all human and natural qualities”. Poets and novelists depicted money as the villain of the piece, the cause of human misery and degradation and jealousy and hatred. Ramakrishna Pillai, it appears, was not completely free from this illusion. His ideas could not transcend the limitations of his time. In a large sense, they were conditioned by the given historical setting.

Ramakrishna Pillai was moved by the growing poverty and misery of the workers, peasants, agricultural workers and artisans. He was agitated by the callousness of the rich who wallowed in luxury and indulged in bribery and corruption while the masses starved. He championed the cause of the working people, hailed

their struggles and supported their demands. He upheld the demands of the peasants and fought against excessive taxation, bureaucratic tyranny and police repression. He tried to awaken the people to an awareness of their own inherent strength. With the historical limitations, he was among the pioneers of enlightenment and one of the first champions of Socialism in India and that right amidst the people, in their own language.

But under conditions in which the working class had not yet emerged as an organised force and precapitalist social relations and ideas were still dominant, he was not in a position to see the industrial workers as the most revolutionary factor in social transformation. It is true that he quoted a passage from the *Communist Manifesto* to explain how hostile classes—the oppressor and the oppressed—carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, in different periods of history. He approvingly quotes even the Marxist view that “these class conflicts are the motive forces of the changes in the world.” But this is only a partial explanation of the Marxist theory of class struggle. In fact, the acknowledgment of classes and class-struggles in history was not the specific contribution of Marx. Such ideas existed even before Marx. In a letter to Wedemeyer, Marx himself wrote in March 1852:

“... No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular, historic phases in the development of production*; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*; (3) that this dictatorship itself constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.”<sup>46</sup>

Ramakrishna Pillai's progressive ideas about freedom, democracy and the sovereignty of the people certainly helped to expose the false claims of the supporters of the Maharaja of Travancore and the British colonialists. But they were nearer to the doctrines of the leaders of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence than to those of Marx. He did not understand the Marxist view about the relation between the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, the former passing into the latter. Marx had upheld the establishment of democracy and the



sovereignty of the people as a step towards the social revolution aimed at the abolition of all class exploitation and all forms of political power. He explained his doctrine as follows:

"In the course of its development, the working class will replace the old bourgeois society by an association which will know nothing of classes and class conflicts. Then there will no longer be any political power, in the strict sense of the term, seeing that political power is the official expression of the conflict within bourgeois society."<sup>47</sup>

Thus, according to Marx the replacement of the political power of the bourgeoisie by the political power of the working class is nothing but a means to put an end to all forms of political power. As he wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"When in the course of social evolution, class distinctions have disappeared, and when all the work of production has been concentrated into the hands of associated producers, public authority will lose its political character. Strictly speaking, political power is the organised use of force by one class in order to keep another class in subjection. When the proletariat, in the course of its fight against the bourgeoisie necessarily consolidates itself into a class, by means of a revolution, makes itself the ruling class and as such forcibly sweeps away the old system of production, it therewith sweeps away the system upon which class conflicts depend, makes an end of classes, and thus abolishes its own rule as a class. The old bourgeois society with its classes and class conflicts will be replaced by an association in which the free development of each will lead to the free development of all."<sup>48</sup>

This was the aim of Marx and this is the significance of Communism: The free unfettered development of each individual human being in a humane society unfettered by oppressors, exploiters, bureaucrats and tyrants is the condition for the free development of all. The aim of man is man himself. To Marx there is nothing greater, nothing nobler than man. As Bhishma put it in the *Mahabharatha*: "*na manushat sresthatharam hi kinchit.*" "There is nothing nobler than man!"

Mention of Pillai's limitations does not affect his contribution nor minimize his understanding of Marxism in its totality. Ramakrishna Pillai has a place in Kerala and Indian history for the pioneering contribution he made in the realm of new ideas to advance the cause of socialism, democracy and freedom.

Ramakrishna Pillai was peerless in political doggedness and ideological consistency among his fellow fighters against autocracy and feudalism in the numerous princely states in his own times. As a native of Travancore he irresistibly and courageously took up cudgels in a consistent and realistic manner against princely autocracy and exposed the gross maladministration and countless crimes committed under it. As a solution he advocated democratic and social rights which were unjustly denied in Travancore of his times. He willingly made the great sacrifice involved in tirelessly advocating the cause of democracy under a ruthless autocracy. The consequent heart-rending sufferings of himself and his family irresistibly remind one of Marx and his family in the long years of their exile. The people of Kerala saw him as their own, and gratefully and adoringly expressed what his life, sacrifices and work meant to them when they adorned him with the title of *Swadeshabhimani* in his own life time.

But Ramakrishna Pillai was no narrow Malayali chauvinist. He closely followed with deep interest, and passionately popularised, the struggle and the ideas of the anti-Imperialist freedom movement in what was then British India. Moreover, he clearly saw not only the inter-relation between princely autocracy and British Imperialism within Travancore but also the relationship between the struggle for democracy within Travancore and the all-India national movement for liberation from British colonial thralldom. His vision was clear and far-reaching, and this adds to the stature of Ramakrishna Pillai.

This is not all. His love for the humble, poor and the toiling masses was deep and all-embracing just as his hatred of their oppressors and exploiters was fierce and unrelenting. This kept Pillai feverishly busy thinking of ways and means to assure freedom and a happy future for the working people. This quest led him to the study of socialism. After avidly studying whatever literature was then available under British colonial conditions on the various schools of Socialist thought, he discovered Marx and his ideas, and he popularised them in the pamphlet now being published in an English translation. It will be seen that his approach was appreciative and positive although his understanding of Marxism had its limitations. He studied Marx's life and ideas, from whatever little and secondary source material was available to him, and expected his readers to do the same. That itself was a contribution to the



task of making socialistic thought known in India.

After Ramakrishna Pillai's expulsion from Travancore autocratic terror became so rampant that his name was talked in whispers and his writings became unavailable. The new generation of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist fighters thrown up by the national movements of the 1920s and 1930s had only heard of him, even within Kerala. The Communist leaders of Kerala rediscovered his biography of Marx, edited and published it in 1946 with an introduction by the author of this note. It was widely acclaimed by the people of Kerala. A new edition of the book was brought out in 1972 with a preface by C. Achutha Menon.

One of the early acts of the first Communist-led Ministry established in Kerala in 1957 was to install an imposing statue of Ramakrishna Pillai just opposite the place where the Swadeshabhimani Press was originally located and also to order the restoration of the confiscated press to its owners. Unveiling the statue, President Rajendra Prasad acknowledged the fact that it was due to the sacrifices of great souls like *Swadeshabhimani* Ramakrishna Pillai that India became free. The people of India thus paid their long delayed homage, at the highest level, to *Swadeshabhimani* Ramakrishna Pillai as the pioneer fighter against princely autocracy and British Imperialism, and for the cause of a socialist future.

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# KARL MARX

(K. Ramakrishna Pillai)

## Foreword

Greatest among mortals are those who have devoted themselves to the betterment of the world, sacrificing all they have on the altar of humanity. The biographies of those great men guide and inspire us in our path of life. Peoples of all countries must be familiar with such biographies. We do not have enough of such biographies in Malayalam. It was this shortcoming which prompted me to attempt a series of biographies under the heading "Benefactors of the World". In these biographies I have tried to indicate briefly the course of their career, and suggest what lessons we can learn from their lives. Apart from this I do not wish to go further into the details of their lives. As a result I believe that each book in this series need not exceed forty to fifty pages of demy 8 size.

Special demands may increase the size of the book. All I can promise is that I would publish these books one by one depending upon the encouragement I get from the people.

I request learned people to help me in fulfilling my ambition by sending me the sort of biographies which I can include in this series.

Should this work inspire other men, this effort would be successful in itself.

Palghat,  
August 4, 1912

K. Ramakrishna Pillai



## KARL MARX

(K. Ramakrishna Pillai)

Machines today have lessened the burden of human labour. They have increased productivity. Accumulated wealth has grown, but so has the poverty of the labourer. Marx wanted to find out the cause of this contradiction and a remedy for this evil. We need not necessarily wonder or worry about the fact that we, Indians, do not have the opportunity to know about Marx as much as those in the West. But, at the same time, every one has the right to be proud of hearing about the life of this great man who devoted his whole life to lessening the sorrows of humanity.

Marx wanted to create equality in the world by destroying the gulf between the rich and the poor. With this view in mind he first pioneered and popularised the ideas of Socialism and Communism in the West. Those ideas that gave inspiration to Marx in his life have now been acclaimed by the whole world. When we realise this truth, we cannot but admire the self-sacrifice of that great man.

Karl Marx was born on the May 5, 1818 in the town of Trevers on the banks of River Morel, in the district called the Rhine Provinces of Germany. His father, a Jew by birth, was a well-known lawyer who had embraced Christianity in his early life. He knew Karl was the most intelligent of his sons, and so took special interest in him. He hoped Karl would attain a high position in the world. He sent his son to the universities of Bonn and Berlin, where he was to study philosophy and ethics as a preparation for a dignified career. The boy, however, strangely spent his time in writing poetry and fiction. Later Karl discovered that he had no real aptitude for composing poems, and he channelled his energy towards the study of philosophy. He pursued the doctrines of Hegel, although not blindly. He showed great discrimination in his acceptance of Hegel's system.

Karl rejected Hegel's 'idealism'. During these days his mind was troubled by diverse studies, but his philosophical doctrines attained a certain maturity. Karl's ideas annoyed his father. He was rather upset by Karl's wasting time on philosophical wool-gathering instead of earning money and attaining a position in the world. In a letter to his son, he referred to financial matters . . . "There is only one matter on which I do not know your opinion, as you don't even tell me what you think about it. What I am referring to is nothing else than that silly thing, 'money' . . . It seems you haven't realised how important it is for a family man . . . And you have a mistaken notion that I don't understand the philosophical doctrines you are expounding." Karl nevertheless did not turn back because of his great interest in philosophy and politics. He even wrote a thesis advocating revolutionary ideas. Naturally, there were grave misgivings about his thesis, spoiling his chances of getting a doctorate. Since the authorities were displeased with Karl, it was feared that he might miss the opportunity of becoming a professor somewhere. His mother lost all hopes of her son earning a lot of money and becoming an important man. Obviously, there was a great conflict between the loving solicitations of his parents and his own youthful and revolutionary ideas. His parents had to bear all this suffering. Although Karl caused a lot of grief to his parents and relatives, he turned out to be a harbinger of happiness to the whole world. What was considered to be a loss to the family was really a gain to the world. History proved it.

If Karl's educational career was interesting, much more memorable was his marriage. His playmate, Johanna Bertha Julie Jenny, was in love with him. She was born in a rich and aristocratic family, and Marx was a penniless graduate. Socially there was a wide gulf between them. However, no force on earth could break their love. Their life reflected the satisfactory nature of their marriage. Jenny shared all her husband's joys and sorrows. Sacrificing the privileges that were due to her by birth, she worked hard along with him for the welfare of the working class. She attained salvation by being a real partner in her husband's joys and sorrows until death parted them forever after thirty years.

During those days, Marx earned his living by writing articles of political interest for various newspapers. Apart from earning a livelihood, this helped him propagate his own political ideas and



doctrines. Germany was in a shattered state at that time. The officials who were responsible for governing the country were autocratic. Their leader was the King of Prussia. People were denied all freedom. Attempts at making some arrangements to rule the country in accordance with the will of the people turned out to be futile. Even inside Germany many small provinces were ruled by individual autocrats. None was responsible for the welfare of the people. Many of Germany's leading intellectuals wanted to destroy this stupid system and give shape to something new. Marx joined them. His articles in *Rheinish Gazette* (*Rheinische Zeitung*) attracted much public attention. No wonder he soon became the editor of this journal. He fulfilled his duties quite cleverly and courageously. However, his acid articles sharply criticising the government policies provoked the anger of the police authorities. In April 1843 the police banned his journal. Referring to this event, Marx wrote to his friend Ruge: "The progressive garb is now removed. Autocracy stands naked with all its forces." Ruge replied: "All the newspapers in Germany cannot be banned for the sake of one or two officials or even of the king himself.... If you desire to arrange another platform for a fight through journalism, you have only one course to follow; quit Germany and get this done somewhere else."

Marx realised that it was impossible to remain in Germany and continue criticising the government. He had already developed an interest in some of the ideas of the French intellectuals. They portrayed Communism as the panacea for the poverty of workers in Europe. This etched a deep impression in Marx's mind. He knew that in politics, along with the struggle to establish democracy, it was an unavoidable necessity to create some economic arrangements for the salvation of the poor workers and peasants. He therefore decided to study the doctrines and economic principles of the French communists. With this intention, he left Germany for Paris. There his life took a new turn.

What he did in Paris was not a mere study of the communist ideas of the French. He took up the editorship of a new paper, *Vorwärts*, published from Paris and dealing with German problems. Piercing arrows were once again showered on the German Government. The Prussian bureaucrats could not endure these poisoned darts. They therefore wrote to the French Government to ban Marx's journal. The request of the Prussian Government

did not go in vain, because Louis Philippe who was ruling France in those days was a notorious person. In January 1845, a French minister banished from Paris Marx and some others who had been writing for the magazine. Marx went to Brussels with his wife and child. He stayed there for about three years. With him in the same city were quite a few of his German friends who had been exiled for political reasons. It was during his stay in Brussels that he developed close relations with the German communists and acquired the cooperation of the communists of the continent. He formed an organisation for the working class called the 'German Workingmen's Club'. Pretty soon, he became the editor of *Deutsche Brussteler Zeitung*, a journal run by the German emigres. He continued corresponding with the radicals in France and Germany, giving talks to the working people on the principles of economics. He tried his best to unite the communist groups scattered in various places. He corresponded with German communists living in London and convinced them that it would be better to shift their headquarters to Brussels, so that he could look after their problems personally. After all this, he formed the 'Communist League' and wrote his celebrated *Communist Manifesto*.

The *Communist Manifesto* was published on February 21, 1848. The very same day, the news about the political revolution in France spread all over the world. The people who wanted liberty revolted against monarchy. King Louis Philippe fled the country *incognito*. He was followed by the same minister who had banished Marx from Paris three years earlier. The French monarchy was dead, and a republic was born.

Meanwhile, the Prussian Government, infuriated by Marx's pungent criticism, had been begging the Belgian Government to banish Marx from Belgium. The prayers had no immediate effect. Very soon, however, the Belgian authorities started getting worried about the communist ideals, spread so vigorously amongst the working class. They panicked. Marx was first imprisoned and later banished.

Fortune was on Marx's side. After the revolution in France, he had no difficulty in getting into Paris. In fact the new government even sent one of its members to invite Marx to Paris. It is strange that the same country, from which Marx was banished by the cruel orders of a King and where Marx had tried to cement



the fraternal unity of the people, now requested Marx to return. He did not stay in Paris for a long time. He returned to Germany after a few months. He wanted to start a journal. The first issue of the *New Rheinisch Zeitung* was published in Cologne on June 1, 1848. The aim of the paper was to strengthen the republic on the basis of the interests and rights of the common people. The German Government was rather unhappy about it. The Government realised that there was practically no difference between this journal and the one banned five years earlier. They waited for an opportunity to strike at Marx.

In the same year a Democratic Congress was held in Cologne. Marx was there in the forefront. Realising the extent of the energy and enthusiasm of Karl Marx, the American Socialist representative, Albert Brisbane, wrote: "I found there Karl Marx, the leader of the popular movement. The writings of Marx on Labour and Capital, and the social theories he then elaborated had more influence on the great socialistic movement of Europe than those of any other man. He was just then rising into prominence, a man of some thirty years, short, stocky with a fine face and bushy black hair. His expression was that of great energy and behind his self-contained reserve of manner were visible the fire and passion of a resolute soul. Marx's supreme sentiment was a hatred of the power of capital, with its spoliations, its selfishness, and its subjection of the labouring classes. As I remember that young man uttering his first words of protest against our economic system, I reflect how little it was imagined then that his theories would, one day, agitate the world and become the most important lever in the overthrow of time-honoured institutions."

It did not take much time for the Government's net to ensnare this courageous revolutionary. Marx and his associates were trapped in a case on February 7, 1849. The charge against them was that they had published some derogatory articles against the public prosecutor and certain police constables. Marx defended his case himself. In his speech of the defence, which lasted about an hour, Marx attacked the Government fearlessly. This was how he concluded his speech:

"Not only does the general situation in Germany but also the state of affairs in Prussia impose upon us the duty to watch with the utmost distrust every movement of the Government and

publicly denounce to the people the slightest misdeeds of the system. In the month of July alone, we had to denounce three illegal arrests. It is the duty of the press to step forward on behalf of the oppressed and their struggles. And then, gentlemen, the edifice of slavery has its most effective supports in the subordinate political and social functionaries that immediately deal with private life—the person, the living individual. It is not sufficient to fight the general conditions and the superior powers. The press must make up its mind to oppose *this* constable, *this* attorney, *this* counsellor. What has wrecked the march of revolution? It reformed only the highest political class, but it left untouched all the supports of this class—the old bureaucracy, the old army, the old courts, the old judges—born, educated and worn out in the service of absolutism. The just duty of the press now is to undermine all the supports of the present political state".

The speech influenced the disposition of the jury. They decided that the defendants were not guilty. Marx and his friends were let off. The defeat in the defamation case aggravated the government's vengeance. Two days later, on February 9, the government pursued Marx and his friends in another case. The charge this time was that they had incited the people to an armed rebellion against the King. The new charge was more grave. Once again Marx made a speech which was the true stroke of a genius, and once again the jury returned the verdict of not guilty. One of the members of the jury even went up to Marx and thanked him for such a speech. Marx had escaped a second time. In May 1849 the people of cities like Dresden in the district of Rhine rose in revolt. The power of the Prussian Government was exhausted. Marx was banished from Prussia and an administrative order banned the newspaper. The last issue of the paper came out on May 19. It was printed in red ink and contained a stirring patriotic poem of farewell in it.

Marx left his motherland for Paris again. His wife's diary reveals his experiences in the city: "We stayed in Paris for a month. Here, too, we were left roofless. One day, the Police Sergeant gave us the orders, as usual, to leave the place in twenty-four hours. We then planned to go to London and made a bundle of all our little belongings. Karl had started for London even earlier".

By the end of June 1849, Marx's family had settled in London.



Their fourth child was born in July. Trapped in the claws of poverty, the baby was not destined to live long. We can only guess the depth of their grief when death paid them the first visit in 1852. They knew it was poverty that had stolen their child from their hands. If we examine their life in London, this does not appear very surprising. For some years they had literally been starving. They had little money except to buy some crumbs of bread occasionally. Marx used to distribute his own share amongst his children and resort to fasting. He used to work at the British Museum on an empty stomach and quite often, cold and hunger would make him faint. He was writing for some of the London journals, but he did not receive adequate remuneration. Whatever little he got was insufficient for their needs. He thought he could try some other job and so applied for a clerk's position. Since he had a poor handwriting, he could not get the post. It was then that he was offered a reporter's job in the *New York Daily Tribune*. He was given a remuneration of a Pound a week. For a long time the family subsisted on this meagre allowance. They had only two rooms: a bedroom and a kitchen-cum-study-cum-drawing room. It was here that many great men visited him and sought his advice. This is what his wife wrote about their life in London:

"Nobody can say of us that we ever made a noise about what we, for years, had sacrificed and had to endure; very little, or never have our personal affairs or difficulties been publicised abroad . . . to save the political honour of the paper (the *New Rheinisch Gazette*) and the civic honour of his friends, he allowed the whole burden to be unloaded on his shoulders; he forsook whatever income he had made and at the moment of his departure, he paid back the salaries of the editors and other bills; he was expelled by force from the country. You know that we did not keep anything to ourselves; I went to Frankfurt to pawn my silverware, the last we had; in Cologne I sold my furniture . . . you know London and its conditions well enough. Three children and the birth of a fourth! For rent alone we paid 42 *thalers* a month . . . our small resources were soon exhausted . . . The keeping of a wet nurse for my baby was out of the question, so I resolved to nurse the child myself, in spite of the constant terrible pains in the breast and the back. But the poor sickly child from the first day of his life, lying in pain day and night . . . so I was sitting one day, when unexpectedly stepped in our landlady whom we had paid 250 *thalers* during the winter,

and with whom we had a contract to pay after that the rent to the owner of the house. She denied the contract and demanded £5, the sum we owed towards rent, and because we were unable to pay at once, two constables stepped in and attached my small belongings, beds, linens, clothes, all, even the cradle of my poor baby and the toys of the two girls who stood by crying bitterly. In two hours, they threatened they would take all and everything away. I was lying there on the bare hard floor with my freezing children . . . The next day we had to get out of the house. It was cold, raining and gloomy. My husband was out hunting for rooms. Nobody wanted to take us in, when he talked of four children. In the end, a friend helped us. I sold my bedding to satisfy the druggist, the baker, the butcher, and the milkman who got scared and all at once presented their bills. The bedding was brought to the sidewalk, and was loaded on a cart. We were able, after selling everything we possessed, to pay up every cent. I moved with my little ones into our present two small rooms in the German Hotel, 1, Leicester Street, Leicester Square. Do not think that these petty sufferings have bent us. I know only too well that we are not the only ones who suffer and I rejoice that I even belong to the chosen privileged lucky ones, because my dear husband, the support of my life, yet stands by my side".

It would be a sacrilege to add even a word by way of comment on this exemplary conduct of a dutiful wife.

Death, which had come to pay a visit to the family, was still hovering around in 1852. Their one-year-old baby girl was taken away by the cruel hands of death. The mother's diary depicts the poverty of those days and the horror they went through.

"On Easter of the same year—1852—our poor little Francisca died of severe bronchitis. For three days, the poor little child wrestled with death and fell a prey at last. Her frail little body lay in the small back room: all of us went into the front room, and when night came, we made our beds on the floor, the three living children lay by our side . . . The death of our dear child had come at a time of the most bitter poverty. Our German friends could not help us. In my anguish, I went to a French refugee who lived near and had sometimes visited us. I told him of our sore need. At once, with the friendliest of kindness, he gave me £2. With that, we paid for the little coffin in which the poor child now sleeps peacefully."



There was an interesting incident during those sad days. Marx's wife had inherited some silver spoons which carried the monogram of the House of *Argyll* on them. Marx took them to a pawnbroker who became rather suspicious, because the aristocratic emblem was incongruous with Marx's shabby clothes. He tried to set the police on Marx. Marx narrowly escaped arrest by giving all kinds of excuses. Later when he was penniless, he had to borrow money from the usurers at the high interest of twenty per cent and sometimes even fifty per cent. Ironically enough, Marx had been criticising millionaires and usurers and demanding the abolition of rent, interest, and profit. The anger of his enemies revealed itself in the unfair rate of interest they extorted from him. After suffering these miseries and after seeing the hunger and agony of his children, he thought of taking up a job. However, his wife pointed out to him that, if he did so, all that he had done for the sake of the proletariat would go in vain. She advised him to carry on with what he was doing. This is what she wrote to one of her friends about her sorrows:

"The first years of our life here were bitter ones but I will not dwell on those sad memories today, on the losses we suffered, nor the dear, sweet departed children whose pictures are engraved in our hearts with such deep sorrow. . . then the first American crisis came, and our income (from the *New York Tribune*) was cut to half. Our living expenses had to be tightened up once more, and we even incurred debts. . . And now I come to the brightest part of our life, from which the only light and happiness was shed on our existence—our dear children. The girls are a constant pleasure to us, because they are affectionate and unselfish. Their little sister, however, is the idol of the whole house. . . A most terrible fever attacked me and we had to send for a doctor. On the 20th of November he came, examined me carefully, and after keeping silent for a long time, broke out: 'My dear Mrs. Marx, I am sorry to say you have got the small pox—the children must leave the house immediately'. You can imagine the distress and grief of the entire household at this verdict. . . I had scarcely recovered sufficiently to be able to leave my bed when my dear and beloved Karl took sick. Excessive fear, anxiety, and vexations of every sort and description threw him upon his sick bed. But, thank heavens, he recovered after four weeks. In the meantime, the *Tribune* had placed us at half pay again. . . To you, my dear friend, I send my

warmest regards. May you remain brave and unshaken in these days of trial. The world belongs to the courageous. Continue to be the strong faithful support of your dear husband, and remain elastic in mind and body . . . yours in sincere friendship, Jenny Marx".

In spite of all this distress, the couple always remained cheerful, because they were able to do their duties; sorrows never worried them. Ecstatic over their children's prattle and games, they were never conscious of their starving stomachs. They often used to walk around in the room, arm in arm, singing old German love songs. In spite of all his difficulties, Marx never took any payment for his speeches for the London proletariat. He was the servant of the poor, and his attempts to improve their lot were a part of his duties. That is why he decided never to accept any remuneration.

It was during these years of Marx's struggle with stress and strain that the German Finance Minister Bismarck attempted to bribe Marx away from his association with the working class. Since Bismarck was a very tactful diplomat, it needs no description how cleverly he set about his task. All his attempts, however, were futile. This was the plan he had adopted: Bucher, one of Marx's old friends, had pleased Bismarck by going over to the government's side. He had, nevertheless, been sending friendly letters to Marx. In his letter of October 8, 1865, he said: *The Staats Anzeiger* (The *State Intelligence*) desires to obtain regular monthly reports concerning the movements of the money market . . . No limitations are set regarding the length of articles . . . Kindly write whether you agree to undertake this and what compensation you desire. . . Progress will have changed many times before it dies; therefore he who wishes to serve the nation during his life time must rally round the government."

Marx immediately grasped the real motive of the letter. He knew that the government, like the scorpion, had its poison at the tail. He was farsighted enough to realise that his followers would lose confidence in his principles and practice and that his work would become futile if he wrote for a government paper, even as a freelance journalist. However hard up he might be, he was determined never to accept the silver coins of a government newspaper. And, he wrote to Bucher accordingly. That is how Bismarck's plan failed. It was Marx's principle that he would never sacrifice his attempts at the betterment of the working class for the sake of



money. His principles were dearer to him than himself or his wife and children. His moral principle were so firm that he resisted bribery.

Marx and his friends organised the 'International Workingmen's Association' in 1864. The Italian patriot, Mazzini was a member of this organisation, which held sway over European affairs for nearly seven years. They held annual meetings at important cities, passing resolutions and deciding upon the course of action. Workers of different nations were firmly united through this organisation. "Workers of the world, unite!" Marx roared. It reverberated throughout the continent of Europe. "We have seen nothing comparable to this resurrection of the workers since the ancient world came to an end and Christianity was born", wrote the *Times*. The leaders of these nations were harassed by their governments. As a result the organisation grew in strength. However, many of its enthusiastic members had to leave following the Franco-German war of 1870-71, and the civil war in France. Many of the supporters became frightened. There was a split among the members; some took the peaceful and legal round under the leadership of Marx, while the others wanted to resort to violent activities, under the Russian philosopher Michael Bakunin. The split weakened the organisation which ceased to exist in 1876.

Marx was very active in literary activities. He contributed articles to newspapers and published pamphlets, essays, manifestos, letters, and so forth, in order to expound the aims and principles of the organisation. Some of these writings were mainly polemics against his opponents. But some have eternal value: To this latter group belongs the short book on *Value, Price and Profit* and the bigger one, the *Critique of Political Economy*. More famous is his *Das Capital*. It has become the revered bible of socialism, an armoury of ideas for every socialist in every country. Its first volume was published during his lifetime. The subsequent two were published posthumously. He had jotted down notes necessary for the second and third volumes. The work became complete, after his friend, helpmate and colleague, Frederick Engels, collected these notes, edited them and had them published.

Now for his last days. For more than a decade, Marx had been working harder than his strength permitted him. His health had broken down for want of nutritious food, worries, and the heavy load of mental work. He was constantly troubled by liver com-

plaints and sleeplessness. In 1881, his wife died. She had been his sole support in life. Anybody can understand how terrible a blow her death must have been for him in his old age. He himself did not live much longer. On the 14th of March, 1883, sitting on his chair with a cheerful expression Karl Marx passed away. He was smiling when death snatched him away. This was how the great savant met his death: A few years later there was suggestion that a monument should be erected in memory of Karl Marx, a stone pillar over his tomb. But one of his disciples said, "There already exists a monument in memory of Karl Marx. It is not hammered out in brass nor is it carved in stone, it is engraved in the hearts of men. His monument is the united effort put up by the socialists of different nations. Every victory of the army of socialists raises this monument higher and higher."

Before I conclude, I shall give a brief discription of the ideas and doctrines which motivated Marx in his humanitarian activities. One of his theories was that all human activities, such as the development and decay of political institutions, religious matters, and literary pursuits, are dependent mostly on economic activities. That is to say, corresponding to the changes in the modes of production in each country and period, there would be changes in the structure of society and man's aims of life. The principle that we should derive from this is that Society obeys certain laws of evolution in every country. These laws in their turn are dependent upon the economic conditions of their society. What we should infer from Marx's doctrines is that natural laws have the greatest importance in social changes and that man's will has only a limited role to play in such changes. Certain critics complained that that was not wholly true. According to them, societies become civilized through the inherent qualities of the individuals composing those societies. Assuming civilisation to be based on natural laws would be worshipping the Goddess of Fortune, they say.

Another of his doctrines is that all the people in the world are more or less divided into two opposing classes who are perpetually at war. Marx thought that the history of the world exemplified this class-war and that these class-conflicts were the motive force of the changes in the world. He wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"Free man and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild master and journey man, in a word, the oppressor and the oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an



uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight. . . our epoch of the bourgeoisie (that is the middle-classes) possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into the two great classes directly facing each other—the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.”

The doctrine concerning political economy propounded by Marx is more important. Why is it that the capitalist owner of an industry who invests capital, becomes richer and richer, while the worker remains poor, however huge the profit created by his labour may be. Marx believed that the worker who increases the value of the product by his labour does not get his due share and that it is more or less expropriated by the capitalists. It may be said that this doctrine is the most important or primary basis of Socialism. Socialists maintain that if the relation between labour and capital is analysed, the prevailing science of economics is absurd, and that the true principles of economics justify the arguments of Socialists. Where does the wage or the remuneration of the worker come from? The present-day economists say that it came from capital. According to modern economics, the Socialists say that: “No, the worker gets his wages from his own labour not from the capital of the capitalists.” Work is labour, and wage the result of labour. What in reality is the labour spent on a product? Is it not the state of enhanced value through the transformation of that product into a new form? Increase in value is the result of this transformation. This indeed is the result of labour. Every change made in the product until it is transformed completely enhances its value. Is not this increase in value used to increase the wealth of capitalists? One can understand the product increases its value by this transformation, that this increased value gradually increases the capital of the owner, and that this increase is the result of the labour of the worker. Under such conditions, even if the capitalists advance the wage of the worker, worker in exchange increases the wealth of the capitalists by his labour. Thus the source of the wage of the worker is his own labour, not the capital of the owner. Therefore, clearly it is quite unjust that the owner of the capital should expropriate the profit accruing from labour, instead of giving it to the worker. This is the most important doctrine in the economics of the Socialists. When Marx explained this doctrine, capitalists became angry as never before. But at the same time it attracted the minds

of many people and gradually spread throughout the world.

What is the nature of the concept of Communism which will be built up on the basis of these notions? It consists mainly of three principles. First, land should be the common property of society, not the monopoly of individuals, groups of individuals or families. Man gets his food, clothes, fuel and medicine from the earth. The earth is our mother. If this earth, which provides the necessities of life, becomes the exclusive property of a class of people, what can the rest do but become the slaves of those landowners? Would the privileged landowners ever be conscious of the needs of the underprivileged ones? They would be solely concerned with their own pleasures. Even if they were conscious of the needs of the poor, would they be ready to satisfy those needs? The social evils like poverty, slavery, and conflicts result from the monopoly over land. The earth is no exclusive property of the fortunate few. The laws of nature do not allow anyone to enforce his right of ownership over it. Private ownership was created by the institution of the king's authority, called the government. The tool that has helped to build it is the law of the government. Let the institution called the government and its laws disappear from the face of the earth. And from the next day onwards no one will have the right or strength to use his exclusive powers over the land. Was there private property at the beginning of the history of mankind? Land was used as the common property in those days. No one was another's slave then, and no one was poor. Is it not possible to have such a life now? Yes, say the Communists. Transform the very institution of the government. Communism is incompatible with the rule of the king and his laws. Let the people rule themselves. Let there be democracy in the country. The whole land could be made into the common property of the citizens in such a way that no private ownership was possible. Let everything produced through commercial effort in agriculture and other spheres, be distributed equally among all men. The result would not only be welfare for the majority, but also socialism for the whole world, say the Communists. The first requirement for achieving such a state is that people should not desire to possess anything as private property. They should leave all property to the society, and, along with that, give up the system of money. Why should we give up the system of money? We shall explain. It is with the help of money that the system of capital is maintained. If the system of money had not existed,



could one accumulate, as capital, all the food one had produced by his labour? Such products are to be consumed immediately. What is the use of hoarding them? They might rot or become dried or useless. If we could sell them and get money, we need not worry about the money going dry or rotting. Money has been instituted as a measure of value. The system of sale and purchase exists only in a society that distinguishes between 'yours' and 'mine'; it has no reason to exist in a society that takes it for granted, "Nothing is mine, everything belongs to the society". Hence, it becomes clear that once we do away with private property, the need for money disappears. Marx has given ample theoretical explanations of the fact that money, by creating evils like poverty, has even caused a deterioration of moral values. It is, however, unnecessary for us to go into the details of his arguments.

As has been stated, Marx has done a great service to humanity through his pamphlets, books and organisations. There is something greater though. He became great by showing the poor workers a road to salvation. These slaves of the millionaires have been lying asleep in their poverty. Marx woke them up and showed them how great their inherent strength was. He showed them that they would become free if they united themselves to use their strength. He made them aware of the fact that if one wants emancipation from slavery, one should struggle for it oneself. "Workers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain". These words impressed themselves very firmly in the minds of the proletariat. Their dormant manliness woke up. This awakening has been spreading throughout the world since then. It has never weakened. How could Marx's words attain such influence and strength? The secret could be discovered in his life itself. He was afraid that if the workers were not awakened from the sleep of poverty, they would remain in their sad plight forever. He knew that this sleep was caused by the rich enslaving them and torturing them. He realised that it was his duty to awaken them from this wretched state and make them courageous. He had experienced all that they suffered. Renouncing social status and wealth, he sacrificed his life for freeing the workers from slavery and poverty. Self-sacrifice gave his words a mysterious magical force. The lives of religious leaders like Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed, the Buddha and others show that no one, who had

struggled for the destruction of evil and the establishment of virtue, has attained his aims without himself undergoing great suffering and self-sacrifices. It is no wonder then that the name of the Communist savant is worshipped by millions of people all over the world.

A famous man named Rousseau worked hard for the freedom of the people in the 18th century. Marx and his friends did the same in the 19th century. Marx's profound erudition brightens his moral stature. He was brought up in an aristocratic and rich family. He could have simply ignored the lower classes, leaving their betterment to other people. However, he was conscious of his own responsibility to them and he knew that the common people could be influenced into a course of action through love and brotherhood. Others had trampled upon the workers; he gave them a great hope and a great purpose in life. This sowed the seed of social freedom in Europe. It has now become a great rooted tree. Posterity will remember what he did, but we can never forget his wife and children who had to undergo great suffering for the cause. Some persons will be remembered with gratitude even when the poverty and slavery of the workers and the power of capital of the rich are no more. They are Marx, his wife, and his friends who put their life and soul into the destruction of evil even while they were starving. Let all mothers sing in glory of that great woman who shared her husband's joys and sorrows, and sacrificed two of her daughters on the altar of socialism.

This author can do nothing more than express the following wish: Let all girls and boys on earth dance when they hear the stories of the children who subscribed to the happiness of their parents by not disturbing them in their duties, by patiently bearing all difficulties with good humour and keeping their own vigour undiminished. I can only pray further: Let the spirit of selflessness of these people, who lived up to the motto of doing good to others be an inspiration to others to engage themselves in similar activities. The author of this book can do no more.

(Translated from Malayalam by K.P. Mohan)



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